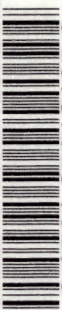


UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



3 1761 05018137 9

JOHN M. KELLY LIBRARY



Donated by
**The Redemptorists of
the Toronto Province**
from the Library Collection of
Holy Redeemer College, Windsor

University of
St. Michael's College, Toronto

HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY, WINDSOR

TRANSFERRED



JESUS, THE ALL-BEAUTIFUL.

QUARTERLY SERIES. VOLUME EIGHTY-TWO.



ROEHAMPTON:
PRINTED BY JOHN GRIFFIN.

[*All rights reserved.*]

JESUS, THE ALL-BEAUTIFUL.

A DEVOTIONAL TREATISE
ON THE CHARACTER AND ACTIONS OF OUR LORD.

*By the Author of "The Voice of the Sacred Heart," and
"The Heart of Jesus of Nazareth."*

EDITED BY THE REV. J. G. MACLEOD, S.J.

SPECIOSUS FORMA PRÆ FILIIS HOMINUM :

DIFFUSA EST GRATIA IN LABIIS TUIS.

(*Psalm xlv. 3.*)



LONDON: BURNS AND OATES, LIMITED
NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO: BENZIGER BROTHERS

1910

HOLY REDEEMER LIBRARY, WINDSOR

BEHOLD MY BELOVED SPEAKETH TO ME. ARISE,
MAKE HASTE, MY LOVE, MY BEAUTIFUL ONE,
AND COME. SHOW ME THY FACE, LET THY
VOICE SOUND IN MY EARS: FOR THY VOICE IS
SWEET, AND THY FACE IS COMELY.

(Canticle of Canticles, ii. 10, 14.)

TO THE READER.

THE different chapters of this treatise on the character and teaching of our Blessed Lord require no introduction by way of Preface; and yet the attention of the reader may be usefully drawn to three points as regards the manner in which the subject has been handled. The main object of the writer is, as she herself states, to concentrate our meditations simply on the words, actions, and general bearing of the God-Man, as revealed to us in Holy Scripture. With this aim in view, the clear and consistent, though unusual, course is followed of illustrating, in well arranged sequence, each leading virtue and characteristic of our Blessed Lord by reference to the several passages in His life, even at the expense of frequent recurrence to the same incident and text. Hence the excellent result is gained of presenting to the mind a complete and most elevating study of our Divine Lord as He has revealed Himself to us, in every line of His teaching, and in every detail of the example which He has left for our imitation. We thus have presented to us a book of meditations that goes far towards enabling us to grasp the whole truth of the dignity, grace, and gentleness of the All-Beautiful Jesus.

SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

SISTER TERESA GERTRUDE of the Blessed Sacrament, member of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was born in the county of Wilts, during the year 1836. Her parents were Protestants, from whom she received in her earliest youth only those cold and formal religious impressions which were then so prevalent. Being the idol of both father and mother, her every desire was gratified, and thus her mind was but little formed to habits of obedience and self-denial. After the death of her father, she went with her mother to live in Devonshire, and cemented still more strongly the singularly tender love between parent and child.

It was at this period that she was brought into contact with persons belonging to the Ritualistic party in the Church of England, and all that was most real and earnest in their practices, at once enlisted the sympathy of her ardent nature. She devoted herself with great zeal to the work of visiting the poor and the sick, and of instructing the young and ignorant; and it was while thus engaged that the path was opened out to her conversion. Having, one day, entered by mistake the house of a poor old Catholic who was sick, she began to console him and exhort him to greater patience in his suffering. But he answered bluntly that he had a book on his shelf which could tell him far more than she knew, and begged her to reach it down for him. When, on finding it to be *The Garden of the Soul*, she perceived the man was a Catholic, though he was evidently not a very fervent one, she resolved to do what she could for him, called at the Presbytery, asked to see one of the priests, and gave him the address of the sick man.

This interview led to a conversation on religious subjects, and gladly accepting a book of instruction offered to her, she promised to read and study it carefully. Her next step was to visit a Catholic Church, at the moment, as it so happened, when the Rosary was being publicly recited, and she felt deeply impressed by the fervour and earnestness of those present. In order to test the whole question now dawning upon her mind, she decided to call on the Rector of the Protestant Church which she attended, as he had always manifested especial interest in her and had shown her great kindness. Amongst the many arguments by which he sought to satisfy her doubts and warn her against supposed errors was the accusation of extravagance in the devotion paid by Catholics to the Virgin Mary; while, with pious horror he read out to her some passages from Father Faber's book, *The Foot of the Cross*. But when his visitor candidly assured him: "That is precisely what I myself also believe," he owned that, if so, he had nothing more to say. Unable to quiet her doubts and anxieties she resolved to seek counsel of God by attending Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in a Catholic Church; and here in an instant every difficulty vanished, and she saw her way clearly to place herself at once under Catholic instruction. After she had herself been received into the true fold, her mother followed her example within a few weeks, acting independently on the movements of grace in her own soul.

The immediate and lifelong result of Sister Teresa's conversion to the Faith was the springing up in her soul of an all-absorbing devotion to the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. From her earliest years she had been inured to suffering through frequent and painful illnesses, which had however in no respect weakened the force or blunted the keen edge of her ardent temperament, for she threw her whole soul into every undertaking she had at heart. To a sound judgment, a clear and penetrating mind, and considerable literary ability, she joined a generous and affectionate disposition, and now she was

inspired with a longing desire to offer herself up entirely to God for a life of constant pain and suffering, according to His will. The first act of God's acceptance of her offering was the call to leave all things and embrace the religious life. The tender mutual love between mother and daughter, mentioned above, proves how bitter a trial to both must have been the prospect of permanent separation. The pain was intense almost beyond description, yet she resolutely persevered in urging on her mother the necessity of this sacrifice.

After reading the Life and Works of St. Teresa, she had no hesitation in making choice of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel for her religious profession. Its spirit of mortification and penance, its prayer for the interests of the Church and the salvation of souls, together with its strict enclosure, appealed irresistibly to those qualities in her which we have described, and which at the same time prevented her being deterred by the habitual weakness of health that led many to question her vocation to so severe a life. She joined the noviceship in 1863, and entered early upon the path of trial and suffering which she could scarcely at that time have anticipated, although even then she made a very full oblation of herself to God. After her profession in 1865 her love of penance and austerities increased in a marked way, and this providentially prepared her for the particular crosses and afflictions which were to be her continual portion through life. In view of the trials of the Holy Father she obtained permission to offer herself up by vow as a victim to the Sacred Heart for the spiritual needs of the Church, and especially for France, the sad neglect of religion in that country being an ever present source of pain and grief to her.

The Divine Spouse of Sister Teresa of the Blessed Sacrament took her at her word, as He did with St. Teresa herself. The answer came in interior trials, rebellion of the passions, difficulties and fears about her state before God, anxieties also of mind when approaching the Sacraments. A series of all the trials that were most intensely painful to her natural character

and affections came upon her, some of these being of peculiar force, and during the last twelve years of her life she was overwhelmed with physical infirmities which might well have broken her spirit and incapacitated her for any exertion bodily or mental. Spinal complaint crippled her whole body, laid her prostrate on a reclining couch, and rendered her nights generally sleepless. Her frame became so twisted that she could scarcely lie in any position, while the strain upon the nerves and shrinking of the muscles caused her exquisite suffering. Those who attended her were as much surprised as her doctor at her calm endurance and her mental energy, preserved through so long a period and under such heavy afflictions. Yet she never became sad and never complained, but bore all with a cheerful smile, reminding others and herself constantly of the far greater sufferings of her Lord and of the Sacred Heart. Those who have already made acquaintance with the first edition of *Jesus, the All-beautiful*, will scarcely be prepared to learn that it was within this period of twelve years, and under the circumstances just described, that a work of such sustained mental effort and of such calm and vigorous thought, and we may add of so bright and tender a spirituality in the treatment of its subject, was composed.

The fact that this holy Religious, possessed evidently of considerable natural gifts, held for many years the office of Mistress of Novices and fulfilled its duties with the utmost care and fervour in her great zeal for souls, will account in some measure for her very observant insight into character, and for that rare acquaintance with theological questions which so many have remarked upon in her writings. Her death took place, somewhat suddenly, on September 30th, 1889. She received Extreme Unction when in full consciousness, and expired in the act of pressing the crucifix to her lips, as with her last words she breathed forth an act of love.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION	<i>page</i> xi
------------------------	-------------------

PART I.

<i>Chap.</i>		
I.	The ideal of beauty. Object of the craving of the human heart	1
II.	The ideal of beauty not realized in this life	8
III.	Idea of beauty imperfect before the Incarnation	13
IV.	The Sacred Humanity invested with the loveliness of God	24
V.	All created beauty centres round the Incarnation. The Cords of Adam	34
VI.	Meditation on the beauty of Jesus is very often vague, general, and superficial	41

PART II.

	I. Jesus beautiful in His love of the Father	47
	II. Jesus beautiful in His love of Souls	58
	III. Jesus beautiful in His Truth	65
	IV. Jesus beautiful in His Humility	79
	V. Jesus beautiful in His Power	94
	VI. Jesus beautiful in His Weakness	110
	VII. Jesus beautiful in His Authority	121
	VIII. Jesus beautiful in His Gentleness	145
	IX. Jesus beautiful in His manner of dealing with the Souls of Men	154
	X. Jesus beautiful in His Sensitiveness	192
	XI. Jesus beautiful in His Zeal	205
	XII. Jesus beautiful in His Patience	217

<i>Chap.</i>		<i>page</i>
XIII.	Jesus beautiful in His Sorrows . . .	230
XIV.	Jesus beautiful in His Joys . . .	247
XV.	Jesus beautiful in His Predilections . . .	266
XVI.	Jesus beautiful in His Aversions . . .	277
XVII.	Jesus beautiful in His Words . . .	287
XVIII.	Jesus beautiful in His Silence . . .	322
XIX.	Jesus beautiful in His Compassion . . .	343
XX.	Jesus beautiful in His Prayer . . .	377
XXI.	Jesus beautiful in His Actions . . .	394
XXII.	Jesus beautiful in His Reproaches, Complaints, and Disappointments . . .	410
XXIII.	Jesus beautiful in His Countenance . . .	424
XXIV.	Jesus beautiful in His Tears . . .	439
XXV.	Jesus beautiful in His Sighs . . .	448
XXVI.	Jesus beautiful in His Fortitude . . .	455
XXVII.	Jesus beautiful in His Disfigurements . . .	470
XXVIII.	Jesus beautiful in His Weariness and Rest . . .	481
Conclusion	491

INTRODUCTION.

THE desire of knowledge is natural to man. History tells us how, in every age, this imperious desire has been the motive of astonishing sacrifices on the part of men, who have quitted country and friends and possessions and conveniences of every kind in order to discover some hidden treasure of science, or to increase their facility in the attainment of some knowledge of which as yet they had grasped but the shadow.

Now St. Thomas says that there are many fountains at which men have tried to extinguish this natural thirst, but nevertheless they have not succeeded, because it is not possible that the knowledge of any creature can content the human mind. The reason for this is evident. No faculty of the soul can ever be satisfied without its proper nourishment, and no human science, however varied in its kind, can provide this universal satisfaction. It must be a knowledge which conducts to rest, for, although few men suspect it themselves, there is in the human soul a yearning not only after knowledge for its own sake, but after that perfect knowledge in which its intellect and will may find repose. Now, as the soul of man is created

to the image of God, its intellect and will cannot be satisfied save by the perfect knowledge and love of Him Who is the first and supreme truth, goodness, and beauty. In the theoretical and practical realization of the truths which guide our steps towards this knowledge consists the science of the saints.

In days like our own when men, urged onward by the natural desire of knowledge, are opening for themselves new fountains at which they endeavour to slake their thirst, nothing can be useless which may in any way contribute to lead them to a fuller and deeper knowledge of that Living Fountain whence all other streams have flowed, as from their source, of that Living Book which contains in itself all true wisdom and science, of that fathomless mine whose exhaustless riches can alone fill the Blessed with beatific joy throughout eternity.

A great Sain^t, and one whose writings are held in the highest esteem by the Church because of her wonderful conceptions in mystical theology, has well declared that *the knowledge of God ennobles the soul*; and this for one reason specially, amongst others, that it conducts to love and from thence to likeness. Doubtless the most perfect of all is the motive to which St. Francis Xavier attributed that love of God which was consuming him, in the words, *solely because He is our God and our Eternal King*. Yet this motive itself must be the result of knowledge, either infused or acquired, and it is a motive of such high purity that

it can be fully appreciated only by a soul already far advanced in the spiritual life. Again, it must be remembered that our first conception of God as He is in Himself, and in the union of the Second Person with His Sacred Humanity, contains within it the germ of every separate truth that we can know regarding Him either by infused or acquired knowledge; just as the mirror reflects a variety of beautiful objects which produce a charming general effect, and are all vaguely presented to our vision without our looking distinctly at any one of them.

Many persons are deterred from applying themselves to the study of virtue by the unattractive form in which it is often set before them; and the same may be said as regards that Divine science which is the knowledge of God, *and of Jesus Christ Whom He has sent*. The very name indeed of Jesus ought to bring before us, as it did before St. Bernard, all the loveliness of Him Who bore it, but St. Bernard was already versed in the science of which the greater number among us have not yet attained the rudiments. For this reason it is well to select some particular point of view from which to meditate on the character of our Divine Lord, that we may study His interior and exterior excellence, and learn all that it is possible for us, in our present state, to know of His perfections. In saying this we in no way mean that we should have our own private *views* about our Lord, for these would serve rather to limit the horizon of our knowledge

than enlarge it, nor do we imply that we should be subjected to any arbitrary rules for arriving at a more intimate knowledge of Him.

The Holy Spirit is the sovereign guide, leading souls by the paths He knows most suited to each one; and happy are they who listen to His gently whispering voice and follow whither it draws them. But before His gentle breath has given any special indication to the soul, in other words, before He has found therein an earnest correspondence to grace, it has need of being directed towards the means suitable for leading it to its desired end, for otherwise the soul would be like a traveller in an unknown country, to whom many paths present themselves which might possibly or even probably conduct him to his destination, but none of which he feels especially drawn to follow, and so, in his indecision what choice to make, he remains far removed from the end of his journey. Now the will easily inclines to that which attracts it, and as the beauty of an object is the most powerful of all magnets to attract to itself the human soul, it is from the point of the beauty residing within and manifested by our Incarnate God that His character will be considered in the following pages. As all the attributes of God combine to form one incomparable whole, namely, His supreme beauty, so with regard to the perfections of our Lord in His Sacred Humanity, everything in Him is beautiful; and hence universal beauty is His sovereign attribute. It might have sufficed to declare that the

Sacred Humanity is the perfect image of the infinite beauty of God ; that, in the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, we have a most blessed Soul in which resides the plenitude of Divine grace united with a Body passible and mortal, and yet endowed with all the qualities becoming the dignity of the Man-God ; that it is a mystery wherein two natures, the Divine and human, are found so intimately allied that the human nature is anointed with the Divinity: *Christus unctus Divinitate* ; a mystery also, wherein a human nature is united to the Divine Person. Yes this might indeed be enough, and more than enough, to recall to our minds all the marvels of the Hypostatic Union, but there are many to whom the different consequences of theological truths do not come home, and with whom dogmatic teaching affords but scanty fuel for the fire of their devotion.

The number is great of those who are wandering up and down this world of ours, famishing for that bread which alone can satisfy their hunger, and unconsciously thirsting for that water of which our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, and which alone can assuage their thirst. Such persons have need of being allured to seek nourishment in pastures as yet unknown to them, and refreshment at a fountain of whose waters they have never drunk. Long ages ago it was predicted that God would draw men to Himself "with the cords of Adam, and with the bands of love."¹ How fully

¹ Osee xi. 4.

this has been verified those can testify who have made the beauty of the Incarnate God the subject of their meditations.

In days when impiety seems to be directed in a very pointed manner and with diabolical hatred against our Lord, when anew, in Him and through Him, the Divinity itself is attacked, nothing that may in any way tend to make us appreciate His beauty more intensely can be useless. But, in order to render that appreciation easier of attainment and more abundant in its fruits, the fullest insight that we can obtain into the beauties of His Sacred Humanity, and the marvellous results of the Hypostatic Union, is of the utmost importance. In the light of so much loveliness the false and dazzling glitter of created objects will pale before the eye, as do the stars in the presence of the sun; and in its turn the heart of man, having discovered at length the Divine magnet which was eternally destined to attract him to his end, will become the glad and ready captive of Him "Whom to know is perfect justice, . . . and the root of immortality."

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY OBJECT OF THE CRAVING OF THE HUMAN HEART.

WHEN Adam went forth from Paradise, fallen from the original state of grace and innocence in which he had been created, there clung to him, together with all the other marks of the excellence of his being, that yearning for goodness and beauty which henceforth, instead of being satisfied as hitherto in his state of happiness, was to become to him a source of trouble and unrest. "His eye had seen the Majesty of the Divine glory, and his ear had heard His glorious voice,"¹ and when he went forth from the Paradise of pleasure, although "the science of the Spirit" which had been created in him, and "the wisdom with which his heart" had in the beginning "been filled," were obscured, yet his memory retained the thought of that beauty which now he beheld as it were afar off. Comparatively dim as had become his contemplation of it, his wounded soul still thirsted after it, with a thirst incapable of being satisfied until his long weary penance should have been accomplished and until the second Adam

¹ Ecclus. xvii. 11.

should have redeemed him from the debt he had incurred. As it was with Adam, so with all his posterity; there remains, so to speak, a faint remembrance of a good which they have lost, some beautiful object the reflection of which they are often unconsciously seeking everywhere, and seeking in vain. Human nature may be compared to a man who, having left his native land in early youth and attained extreme old age, preserves still some memories of the charms of his natural home. Loved faces seem to look at him through the shadowy twilight, and ever and anon the broken strains of some half-forgotten song, or the tones of some once familiar voice, strike upon his ear and awaken chords within his heart that perhaps had long been mute. Thus is it with the human soul exiled from its native home—the native home of beauty.

The secret of man's yearning after beauty, the ideal of which he still retains vaguely within him, may be found in the words which his Creator spoke in the beginning: "Let us make man to our image and likeness."¹ Now God is eternally contemplating and loving His own infinite beauty, and He willed, in creating man, to implant in him a yearning which nothing less than the Divine beauty should ever satisfy, and to assign to him no other centre than Himself. As that beauty itself in which the world of nature is steeped, that remnant of loveliness which reposes on every creature that God has formed, is a trace of the Creator's hand, so is the yearning after beauty in the soul of man a witness of that Divine image to which it has been made.

This trace of the Divine handiwork is to be found pervading the whole human family without exception,

¹ Genesis i. 26.

but its impression is more or less strongly marked in proportion as the likeness has more or less degenerated from the Divine original, or has been more or less fully developed. We find it in the little child whose eye, revealing as yet but the loveliness of innocence, brightens with delight at the sight of some gaily-tinted object, without at the same time any knowledge of its use or the value to be set upon it. The like trace meets us in the savage buried within the depths of the mighty forest, whose soul is more deeply still immersed in the night of some hideous form of idolatry. There is for him in the vast solitudes he inhabits a beauty which he does not understand, to which yet he clings with a devotion that seems to bear some affinity to the ascending tendency of his soul towards "the Great Spirit," Whose existence somewhere he vaguely feels.

Sympathy with what is pure and innocent manifests itself even in the sinner sunk in the lowest depths of degradation, for many an instance of this fact could be related by persons in the habit of visiting the dwellings of the lower classes in great cities. They could tell us how even in chambers occupied by poor creatures given up during long years to shameful sins, some tenderly cherished plant has met their eye, whose sickly flower has been perhaps the only object in that abode of shame which did not savour of its degrading character. Or it may be some hapless little singing bird that by its presence there and its sweet clear notes calls forth from a sin-laden heart some better feeling, transient indeed, but yet the only pure one it ever knows. It is the faint trace of the Creator's hand which sin has not been able to efface from the soul, the dim, well-nigh wholly obscured memory of the native home of the

beautiful from whence it first came forth. The very follies after which men run, the creature-worship to which in their delirium they become enslaved—what are these but a perversion within their souls of that yearning after beauty implanted in them by God Himself, which, if directed into its legitimate channel, would lead them to the Supreme Beauty and Sovereign Good—the Everlasting God.

To the student of human nature, all that has been said will become more clear in proportion as his knowledge extends; and he will be compelled to avow that in the child as in the grown man, in the savage as in the highly educated, in the sinner as in the saint, a craving after the beautiful, in some degree or other, never fails to manifest itself. Very different, however, are the degrees, and very varied the forms assumed by this natural yearning in different souls. It is, of necessity, very limited in a child, whose faculties are undeveloped and whose capacity for the appreciation of the beautiful is as yet exceedingly restricted; but, unless accidental circumstances come in the way, together with the development of its faculties the mental horizon widens before the interior eye of the child, and his appreciation of beauty intensifies, because he has within him the germ, as it were, of the knowledge of every kind of beauty, from the least estimable, that namely of corporeal beauty in all its forms, up to the highest or the Divine beauty, from which all the others are but emanations.

Again, the capacity for the appreciation of beauty in cultivated and intellectual races is far greater than it is in the savage, or in those races and conditions which are contiguous to the savage. The latter is deficient even in the knowledge which could convey to his mind

any idea of beauty, unless it be of the lowest order, and that in a very limited degree. He seems to belong almost to another kind of existence, when we compare him with those whose faculties are developed by cultivation and whose intellect ranges among higher and nobler objects. And even among these again, their power to appreciate the beautiful unfolds and strengthens in proportion to the opportunities which are afforded them of expansion and cultivation. There are besides innumerable varieties among the same race and class of beings, resulting from the free choice exercised by God in the disposal of His gifts, which He distributes in the order of nature as well as of grace with more or less abundance, according to His designs in respect of particular souls. When we speak of the differences existing between various grades of appreciation in the spiritual order, we seem to enter into another state of things; and in fact we do so, for we pass from the natural to the supernatural sphere, and then we begin to understand the reality of those words of Scripture: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."¹ Every additional capacity or power of comprehension and of appreciation of beauty, in the order equally of nature and of grace, may be regarded as a gift of God, inasmuch as it enables man to discern the manifestations of the Divine Beauty in creation and redemption, and to attain to a new and higher perception of it in God Himself.

Other and secondary benefits exist as flowing from a keen sense of the beautiful, among which are the facility and multiplied opportunities it affords for sacrifice and mortification, more especially since the souls whose appreciation of the beautiful is most

¹ St. Luke xii. 48.

extended, are, as a natural consequence, possessed of a more than ordinary sensitiveness with regard to its opposite. Now, if we refer this principle to the kingdom of grace, it will help us to understand how greatly that soul in whom God has implanted a superior discernment of beauty is indebted to Him. Its inward eye will be quick to detect traces of the Divine loveliness where others less finely organized would pass them by unnoticed. From "the cedar on the mountain to the hyssop on the wall,"—from the fly buzzing in the evening air to the eagle grandly soaring far above the highest mountain peaks—from the savage dwelling with the beasts in his forest fastnesses—or the poor negro sunk in his degradation, and despised; up from these to the saints whom the Church of God has placed upon her altars—on each and all will appear, in characters more or less distinct, the impress of God's hand to the eye of him whose vision has been illuminated by the gift of God. Everywhere and in all things, to such a soul will some one or other of the Divine attributes be continually revealing itself, and revealing itself under the character of *Beauty*. This facility is a wonderful preservative on the one hand against sensuality in the enjoyment of God's works, and on the other against discontent when He manifests Himself under appearances naturally repugnant to human inclination.

Doubtless in a vast number of excellent persons a yearning for the beautiful is not very strong, nor their ideal of beauty very largely developed, but we question if among those who have attained the higher degrees of sanctity there has ever been found one in whom both the sense and appreciation of beauty have not been exquisitely keen. It is not so much the form and

colour meeting the outward eye, nor the material sound striking on the outward ear that rivets the attention of the saint. It is rather an invisible something, which cannot be defined, a deeper, more mysterious loveliness not visible to the eye of flesh, which speaks to the soul concerning God and the true source and home of spiritual beauty.

All this is admirably expressed by St. John of the Cross in his *Spiritual Canticle*, where, speaking of the charm which underlies those objects that can be apprehended by the intellect, he calls it "the I know not what," which no language can define, but of which the soul in its inmost recesses is keenly sensible. Thus, with the saints, the appreciation of beauty is far different from what it is in those who regard it merely with the human eye and from a natural point of view. With the former, it is in the order of nature what the mysteries of the Incarnation are in the order of grace—means of being "carried on to the love of things invisible."¹ For them the whisper of God speaks everywhere, bringing them Divine messages conveyed in a language which to others would be unintelligible. For them, a radiance like the reflection of a golden sunbeam rests upon all creation, irrational and rational, gilding each object with varying brightness, and ever filling their souls with a sense of that Divine Eternal Beauty for the fruition of Which they never cease to long and sigh. The forms beneath which they discern Him enkindle within their breasts the flames of love, which mounting upward, carry thither their hearts to the only true rest the saints can seek—the bosom of God, Who alone deserves the title of beautiful.

¹ Missal. Preface for Christmas.

CHAPTER II.

THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY NOT REALIZED IN THIS LIFE.

ST. JOHN of the Cross, one of the greatest mystical theologians and writers in the Church, speaks of creatures as the "traces of the passage of God, revealing His greatness, power, and wisdom, and His other Divine attributes." In passing, "He clothed them with His beauty," so that they should be for man a testimony to the Divine perfections of the Creator. But, while created things bear upon them traces of the Divine passage and manifest the impress of the Divine beauty, they are yet inadequate to the yearning of the human soul, which will never rest contented with them.

Who has not stood, on a summer's evening, and watched the sun setting in a sea of gold, reflecting back its rays across the ocean waves and marking a track along the pathless waters? Who has not often watched it descending behind some weird moorland height, or those tall pine-trees that bound the horizon and stand out in their grandeur against the illuminated sky with a charm which is all their own? Or again, who is there that has not looked on some fair outstretching landscape, such as frequently meets the eye, and felt a certain pensiveness, an almost melancholy steal into his thoughts, without any personal associa-

tions likely of themselves to produce this impression? The explanation is that all created loveliness has a message for the heart of man, which to the greater number is unintelligible. Its design is to suggest thoughts of the Creator, and with the spiritually minded it fails not of its end. But for innumerable souls this message is made void; although they are conscious of an impression within them, degenerating but too often into sentimentalism or a morbid melancholy. The very fact, however, that the beauty of irrational creation has power to produce this pensiveness, which, whether the soul recognize it or not, is but a yearning after the Supreme Beauty that has left its touches in the beauty of each created thing,—this fact proves that the ideal never can be realized in this life, and consequently that wherever man may seek it, he will never be fully satisfied.

The Saint whose words we have given above speaks of creatures “babbling I know not what,” and although, in its strict sense, this is to be understood of the knowledge of God which is partially revealed in rational creation, and can never be more fully revealed here below, yet for our purpose there is a sense in which it may be equally applied to the irrational creation, though in a far inferior degree.

St. John of the Cross thus explains himself: “The rational creation wounds me by relating Thy thousand graces; but that is not all, there is something still more, I know not what, that remains unspoken, something still to be uttered, a certain profound impression of God still to be traced, a certain deep knowledge of God ineffable, the ‘I know not what.’ . . . The soul, comprehending that there is something further of which it is profoundly sensible, calls it ‘I know not what.’ As

that cannot be understood, so neither can it be described, though it may be felt. Hence the soul says that the creature babbles because it cannot perfectly utter what it attempts in thus babbling, as infants babble who cannot explain distinctly or speak intelligibly that which they would convey to others."¹

What has been said in the preceding chapter must however be borne in mind, that although every human soul possesses within it this yearning for the uncreated beauty of God, yet it does so in very different degrees, and it expresses this desire in very different ways, according as it varies in character. As has just now been said, it is the spiritually minded only who will recognize that the unsatisfied longing for *something further*, which produces in the soul a certain pensiveness, is the thought of the Creator as suggested by every form of beauty here on earth. There must be great variety in the degree of clearness with which they recognize this fact, as well as in the intensity with which they will desire the fruition of God, but "no soul that really loves can ever be satisfied or content short of the fruition of God."²

Sufficient has been now said to convince us that the ideal of beauty can never be realized in this life, because everything which is not God is inadequate to form that ideal after the realization of which the human heart yearns. Moreover, "man shall not see God and live,"³ for this reason that he would be unable in his present state to support the excess of love which the vision of the ineffable Divine beauty must necessarily produce. Moses had caught such rapturous glimpses of the Divine beauty above the cloud resting on Mount

¹ *Spiritual Canticle*, Explan. vi. Stanza. ² *Ibid.* Explan. vii. Stanza.

³ Exodus xxxiii. 20.

Sinai, that afterwards he prayed for a more unveiled vision of God's glory, entreating of Him: "Show me Thy face, that I may know Thee, and may find grace before Thine eyes."¹ By these words he prayed to be allowed to attain to a perfect love of God through a clearer knowledge of His beauty; and his petition drew forth from God the declaration quoted above, "Man shall not see Me and live."

If it were practically understood by all that no created loveliness can ever content the craving of the human heart, there would be an end to those searches after shadows by which men seek to compensate themselves for the absence of a Good which they never can fully possess here below, and of Whose beauty they can behold but the traces. The greater number, it is true, fail to understand that they are seeking compensation for the absence of an object, the possession of which alone could satisfy them. But the fact is not the less true on this account.

We are told that the dove, when flying across the desert, thirsts for the waters of Palmyra, and in her inability to reach with sufficient speed the fount after which she is panting, being consumed with thirst, she is obliged to descend and sip from some nearer fountain. Herein we have a true figure of man himself, who, in his incapacity for attaining in this life the everlasting fountain, the fruition of uncreated beauty, strives in vain to slake his thirst at streams whereof the water is both soon exhausted and is frequently corrupted by its commixture with the earth through which it flows. This, however, will not be the case with those who really love God. They may be tempted, it is true, through the weariness of waiting, to withdraw like the

¹ Exodus xxxiii. 13.

two disciples who, when fatigued and saddened by the delay in their expectation, withdrew from Jerusalem and passed over to Emmaus in search of consolation among their kindred. But these of whom we speak will recognize all the more that no creature can satisfy their longing, for this can rest content with nothing short of the vision of Him of Whose beauty all created loveliness is but the reflection.

Such then is the secret of the longing of the Saints for that life wherein they may indeed see God and yet live, for that land where shadows shall have passed away, and where the Uncreated Beauty shall burst forth upon us in all its splendour, flooding our souls with the joy which here below they could never have had strength to bear.

CHAPTER III.

THE IDEAL OF BEAUTY IMPERFECT BEFORE THE INCARNATION.

PREVIOUS to the Incarnation of the Word, the idea of God's beauty was in some sort overlaid by fear. Thus when we read in the Sacred Scriptures of the various communications of God to men under the appearance of an Angel, they remained generally in ignorance of the majesty of Him with Whom they conversed, until after the apparition had passed away. This was the case with Jacob, as we read in the thirty-second chapter of Genesis; it was the same with Manue who, struck with fear, exclaimed to his wife, "We shall certainly die because we have seen God."¹ In those days the vision of God caused so great dread not only by reason of God's own declaration to Moses that no man should see Him and live, which declaration was very present to the minds of the people; but also because, before the promised Saviour had come, they could not, even though dying in a state of grace, see God, but were detained in Limbo, far absent from Him until the Redemption should have been accomplished.

Moreover, in those days they had not drawn so near to God by love, seeing that their knowledge of Him was more obscure, wherefore His near presence failed

¹ Judges xiii. 22.

to add any intensity to their love. For the like reason even Moses, after having twice besought God to show him His face, when hid in the hole of the rock, bowed himself down prostrate to the earth, and had no words to utter but such as seemed to express an overwhelming sense of awe at the thought of the Divine attributes. "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, . . . and no man of himself is innocent before Thee, Who renderest the iniquity of the fathers to the children, and to the grandchildren unto the third and fourth generation."¹ Elias, likewise, when he heard "a whistling of the gentle air," wherein was the Lord, "covered his face with his mantle," in token of the great awe that filled his breast.² Even David, although in the Psalms he speaks so constantly of the goodness of God, yet clearly manifests how impressed he is with a dread of the Divine justice, and of the terrible vengeance and severity that attend the manifestations of God's power and majesty. It was reserved for the law of grace, after God had been "seen upon earth and had conversed with men,"³ to satisfy the craving of the human heart, and to temper with love by the manifestation of the Divine beauty in human flesh that fear and anxiety which had hitherto been predominant in man's relations with his Creator and his ideas regarding Him, even though the anticipation of the Redeemer Who was to come was pre-eminently suggestive of His Divine beauty.

There is no more imperious yearning in man's heart than the desire to know God, the desire to know Him with an experimental knowledge, not vaguely and from

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7, 8.

² 3 Kings xix. 12, 13.

³ Baruch iii. 38.

afar off, but familiarly, so as to arrive at an intimate understanding of His character and perfections in order to make of Him a friend with whom one can converse in the union of heart with heart. For this the human race had been longing during four thousand years, and this the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word has actually effected. So willing was God to gratify the inherent desire of His creatures, that we seem fully allowed to believe that, even if Adam had not sinned, the Word would still have become Incarnate, not, indeed, by taking a mortal body capable of suffering, as became necessary in the actual history of man, but by taking a body that should be immortal, impassible, and glorious; not with the view of redeeming man, where no redemption would have been needed, but of uniting Himself to man, and thus drawing to Himself the homage of man's whole being—his body and soul, his exterior and interior.¹

However this may be, it is certain that the sighs and prayerful expectations of the Saints under the Jewish Law were most pleasing to God, and that He consoled the Prophets of old with the inspirations He gave them concerning the Holy One, Who was to come and dwell in the midst of His chosen people.

The whole of Scripture is pervaded with the beauty of the promised Redeemer, and to the specially illumined eye of the contemplative soul the Ancient Testament is everywhere radiant with the reflection cast by the nearness of His approaching figure. It is like a golden aurora announcing the rising of the Sun of Justice, Who

¹ "All the Fathers of the first ages have held that Christ would not have become Incarnate if Adam had not sinned. The Abbot Rupert was the first, or one of the first, who undertook to establish a contrary opinion" (D'Argentan, *Les Grandeurs de Jesus Christ*).

is to shine upon the earth in all His splendour ; and as over the ages that preceded His coming that golden light shone forth like a precursor of Him, so after the Incarnation all things are tinged with the loveliness which still remains, like the rays of the departed sun, in bright reminiscence of his passage across our earth.

What vast fields are opened out to our meditation by the types that foreshadow our Lord in the various offices which He came to fill ! One of these was the first Adam, who expiated in his exile from Paradise the sin which had doomed him to find thorns wherever he went, that sin which the second Adam, coming down from the eternal Paradise to dwell amongst the thorns of earth, alone could blot out. Again, in "Abel the just," to whose offering God had respect, although the object of jealousy to the elder brother, we have the touching figure of the Priest of Calvary marked for death by the jealous eye of the Synagogue. In Noe, to whom God declared that for the sake of man He would no more curse the earth, nor destroy every living soul as He had done, we behold Jesus the Saviour in consideration of Whom God would look with compassion on the sins of man, "the imagination and thought of whose heart are prone to evil from his youth."¹ In the meek Isaac is presented to us an exact foreshadowing of Him Who was to be "led as a sheep to the slaughter," the true Victim of the Father's will. In Jacob, the supplanter of his brother, we see a vivid representation of Jesus, the supplanter of the Synagogue and the recipient of His Father's benediction ; whilst Joseph, sold by his brethren and raised to honour in a strange land, presignified Jesus rejected by His own people, sold by one "in whom He trusted," and

at the same time accepted by the Gentiles as their King.

The touching patience of the holy man Job and the pathetic relation which he makes of his miseries, bring before us the long-suffering of Him Who, more than Job, had been "an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame," Who had "comforted the heart of the widow and was the father of the poor," Whom "the ear that heard Him blessed, and to Whom the eye that saw Him gave witness."¹ In the following chapter the force of the comparison comes out still more distinctly, when Job tells us how "the younger in time scorn him, that he is turned into their song and become their by-word, and that they are not afraid to spit in his face, . . . that they have lain in wait against him and they have prevailed, and there was none to help, . . . that he is brought to nothing and compared to dirt, that he wept heretofore for him that was afflicted, and that now he cries and is not heard." As we read of the persecution which this holy man had to endure from those whom he called his friends, and who in the days of his prosperity had "held their peace at his counsel," and had been the recipients of his bounty, we cannot fail to recognize the figure of Him Who was to become "their song all the day long to His people,"² and "Who found none to comfort Him."³

Lastly, in David, the meek penitent, the gentle King, whose tender heart seems ever more ready to pardon than to seek revenge, who accepts the chastisements of God as the just punishment of his sins, we perceive the sublime figure of Him Who, having taken upon Himself the whole world's guilt, submits to all that the Divine justice exacts, beholding in all creatures

¹ Job xxix. 10, 11.

² Lament. iii. 14.

³ Lament. i. 21.

but the instruments of His Father's wrath. Who could read the touching narrative of David's flight from his son Absalom, when he had conspired against him, and not be forcibly reminded of Him Whose grief of griefs it was that "His own" rose up against Him? While we contemplate the humbled King going forth on foot and crossing the brook Cedron, ascending Mount Olivet, "weeping, walking barefoot, and with his head covered," on his way to his hiding-place "in the plains of the wilderness,"¹ another figure rises up before us, one Who, more than a thousand years later, crossed the same brook Cedron and "drank of the torrent in the way," not flying indeed from those who sought to destroy Him, but meekly bowing down beneath all that their fury suggested to them to do. When Semei came out against David, casting stones at him and cursing him, so that one who stood by, resenting the injury offered to the King in his humiliation, would fain have cut off the offender's head, David in his meekness restrained him, for he regarded in the offender but the instrument of the just anger of God.² In all this we are strikingly reminded of the meek Lamb Who, when Peter in his indignation cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, said to him, "Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"³

That which we have simply suggested in passing might well have been drawn out at greater length, did it enter into our present purpose, but enough has been said to show that the figures in the Old Law are radiant with the beauty of the Divine Reality, when studied with spiritual discernment by one whose mind is full of Jesus.

¹ 2 Kings xv. 28, 30. ² 2 Kings xvi. 6, seq. ³ St. John xviii. 11.

There are, however, other parts of the Sacred Scriptures in which the beauty of the promised Saviour is more directly implied, and the Prophets, particularly Isaias, Jeremias, and David in the Psalms, are fertile in treating this subject. The first-named, foretelling the conversion of the Gentiles, exclaims: "They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God,"¹ whereby he indicates the Messiah, Who in His Divine Person is the splendour of the glory and the beauty of the Father. For the same reason He is called in Scripture the *face of God*, and the priest in the Ancient Law pronounced benediction over the people in the terms which God had prescribed: *Benedicat tibi Dominus, et custodiat te; ostendat Dominus faciem suam tibi, et miseretur tui; convertat Dominus vultum suum, et det tibi pacem*—"May God bless thee and keep thee; may He show thee His face, and may He have pity on thee; may He turn His countenance towards thee and give thee peace."²

Theodoret explains that God by the words, His *face* and His *countenance*, indicates His own Divine Son, for Whose coming to the children of Israel the priest thus expressed his desire, age after age. The force of the comparison lies in this, that as the character of a man reveals itself more through his features than in any other part of his body, so God the Father is clearly manifested by His Son, and infinitely more by Him than by all creatures together. Moreover, as the beauty of man is marked upon his countenance, where it is, so to speak, concentrated, and whence it exercises its empire, so the Divine beauty resides, in a special manner, in the Son.

The Angelical Doctor, St. Thomas, teaching this truth and giving a reason for it, asserts that three things

¹ Isaias xxxv. 2.

² Numbers vi. 25, 26.

are requisite to constitute the beautiful: the first being integrity of the parts; the second, a just proportion and perfect agreement between those parts; and the third, that lustre and brightness which adorn and illuminate each part in detail. The Son of God possesses virtually the first of these, since He possesses in Himself truly and perfectly the nature of the Father in all its completeness. He has also the second, because He is the express image and the substantial likeness of the Father. He possesses also the third, because He is personally the Word, and in consequence, as says St. John Damascene, is the light and the splendour of the Divine understanding.¹

In every prediction pronounced by the Prophets with reference to our Lord we feel the idea of beauty conveyed to our minds, even when it is not formally expressed. Thus we find Him repeatedly spoken of as a flower, or as a bud, &c.: "The bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory."² "In those days and at that time, I will make the bud of justice to spring forth unto David."³ "And I will raise up for them a bud of renown."⁴ "I will raise up to David a just branch, . . . and this is the name that they shall call Him, the Lord our Just One."⁵ "And then shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root."⁶ "I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys."⁷ "Thus saith the Lord God: I myself will take of the marrow of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent. On the high

¹ Père Saint-Jure, *De la Connaissance et de l'Amour de Jesus Christ*.

² Isaias iv. 2.

³ Jerem. xxxiii. 15.

⁴ Ezech. xxxiv. 29.

⁵ Jerem. xxiii. 5, 6.

⁶ Isaias xi. 1.

⁷ Cant. ii. 1.

mountains of Israel will I plant it, and it shall shoot forth into branches and shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar, and all birds shall dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof. And all the trees of the country shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree.”¹ “Israel shall spring as the lily and his root shall shoot forth as that of Libanus; his branches shall spread and his glory shall be as the olive-tree: and his smell as that of Libanus. They shall be converted that sit under his shadow; they shall live upon wheat, and they shall blossom as a vine.”² “What is the good thing of Him (God), and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins.”³

We find our Lord again spoken of as a shepherd, under which beautiful figure He so loved to describe Himself when He came on earth: “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David, the prince in the midst of them, he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd.”⁴ “Behold, I Myself will seek My sheep and will visit them. As the shepherd visiteth his flock in the day when he shall be in the midst of his sheep that were scattered, so will I visit My sheep and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. . . . I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures, . . . there shall they rest on the green grass and be fed in fat pastures upon the mountains of Israel.”⁵ “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His

¹ Ezech. xvii. 22, 23, 24.

² Osee xiv. 6, 7, 8.

³ Zach. ix. 17.

⁴ Ezech. xxxiv. 23.

⁵ Ezech. xxxiv. 11, 12, 13, 14.

bosom, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young."¹ "He that is merciful to them shall be their Shepherd, and at the fountains of waters He shall give them drink."²

Our Lord is elsewhere predicted under the figure of a fountain: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David."³ "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."⁴ Again, He is promised as a shining light: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen."⁵ "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come."⁶ "I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp."⁷ In other places we have portrayed the beauty of the character of the Saviour Who was to come: "Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth."⁸ "The bruised reed He shall not break,"⁹ &c. He is sent "to comfort all that mourn."¹⁰ "Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour, He is poor and riding upon an ass."¹¹ He will "seek that which was lost," and "will bind up that which was broken and strengthen that which was weak."¹²

In other passages again, we have His beauty formally alluded to: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace."¹³ "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength."¹⁴ "Thou art beautiful among the sons

¹ Isaias xl. 11.

² Isaias xlix. 10.

³ Zach. xiii. 1.

⁴ Isaias xii. 3.

⁵ Isaias ix. 2.

⁶ Isaias lx. 1.

⁷ Isaias lxii. 1.

⁸ Isaias xvi. 1.

⁹ Isaias xlii. 3.

¹⁰ Isaias lxi. 2.

¹¹ Zach. ix. 9.

¹² Ezech. xxxiv. 16.

¹³ Isaias lii. 7.

¹⁴ Isaias lxiii. 1.

of men.”¹ “With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously and reign.” . . . “Out of Sion the loveliness of His beauty, God shall come manifestly.”² “The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty.”³ “As rivers in drought, and the shadow of a rock that standeth out in a desert land. The eyes of them that see shall not be dull and the ears of them that hear shall hearken diligently.”⁴ “Thy eyes shall see thy Teacher, and thy ears shall hear the word of one admonishing thee behind thy back,”⁵—words which sufficiently reveal the attractiveness of the Teacher Who was to come, Whose beauty should rivet the eyes of those who beheld Him, upon Whose lips “grace is poured abroad,”⁶ so that men should hang upon His accents and be compelled to declare that “never did man speak like this Man.”⁷

These and many other passages indicate how pregnant with the idea of His beauty was the anticipation of the promised Redeemer in the minds of the ancient Saints, and how ardent consequently was their longing that the clouds should “rain the Just One, and the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour,”⁸ Who should manifest to His people the loveliness of God, and by the power of His beauty take away “their stony heart and give them a heart of flesh.”⁹ Moreover, for the souls full of the love of Jesus there will be a hidden charm in every word throughout the Ancient Scriptures that in any way relates to Him. They will find a reflection of His beauty in every expression and every type that is prophetic of Him, whether it formally refers to His beauty, or conveys only the idea

¹ Psalm xlv. 3.

⁴ Isaiah xxxii. 2, 3.

⁷ St. John vii. 46.

² Psalm xlix. 2, 3.

⁵ Isaiah xxv. 20, 21.

⁸ Isaiah xlv. 8.

³ Psalm xcii. 1.

⁶ Psalm xlv. 3.

⁹ Ezech. xxxvi. 2

of it. This is for them the sweetness of David's harp; this, the poetry surpassing every other, speaking from the inspired pages of Isaias and Jeremias.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SACRED HUMANITY INVESTED WITH THE LOVELINESS OF GOD.

IT is acknowledged by all that the greater the apparent disadvantages are through which an influence has to win its way in order to attain success, the greater and grander will be the triumph when once obtained, and the more striking will be the proof of that strength of purpose by which the victory has been won. It is this principle that we see illustrated in a remarkable manner in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came upon earth under an appearance very different indeed from that expected by the Jews. Instead of power He put on weakness; instead of a royal throne, He chose a stable; in place of honours, abasement and annihilation; and before riches He preferred poverty and dependence. "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."¹ Nevertheless, that for which He came upon earth has been accomplished, and that which power and riches and honours had failed to obtain, the might of His beauty hath won. Not only to save men by dying for them, did He descend from His heavenly throne, but also to draw them to His Father by manifesting before

¹ St. Matt. viii. 20.

them in human flesh the beauty of the Godhead. Let us pause for a moment and contemplate with reverent love the marvels by which He effected His design. Our Lord says of Himself, when addressing His Eternal Father at the close of His life: "All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine: and I am glorified in them."¹ And scholastic theology has enabled us to ascertain the depth and meaning of these Divine words.

It must ever be borne in mind that Jesus is the Son of God, the Image of the Father, and His Word. Now the Father eternally begetting His Son communicates to Him His whole Divine Essence. Thus the unity of His Divine Nature with His Father is not merely specific as in the generation of created things, but also numerical, that is to say, He is not only of the same Essence as the Father, but shares, equally with the Father, the whole Divine Essence. Such is the perfection of the Divine generation, according to which there is nothing that the Father has which the Son does not possess, and this by right of eternal generation. Jesus is the Word which the Father had uttered from eternity; "and by Him all things were made"—*Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*.² He is the revelation of the eternal mind of God. In order to explain this more clearly, we quote the following lines from the work of an eminent theologian:³ "God the Father has wished to speak to you Himself by addressing to you that great Word, that only Eternal Word which He alone is capable of pronouncing. 'God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son.'"⁴

¹ St. John xvii. 10.

² St. John i. 3.

³ D'Argentan, *Les Grandeurs de Jesus Christ*.

⁴ Hebrews i. 1, 2.

Let us ask ourselves how we act when we wish to speak to some one. First, we frame our speech within ourselves, the thought, namely, which we have conceived in the privacy of our own mind. As long as it remains thus hidden within us, it is altogether mental and known only to ourselves, who alone as yet possess the key to the secret. When, however, we wish to produce it externally, in order to make it known to others, we give to it a sensible and articulate utterance; it then becomes public, and without ceasing to remain within us, it passes forth into the mind of others, who learn by this means what we think, because we have produced externally our mental conception, clothed with a sensible voice. This in some sort explains how God the Father held His thought, that is to say, that eternal conception which is His adorable Word, hidden from man in the mystery of His Divinity, so that none could know His mind. It enables us also to recognize that the Divine generation of the Son is the simple and necessary act of God, by which the whole of His Divine Nature is communicated to the Word, resting eternally in Himself.

But at length God was pleased to reveal Himself to us, and to produce externally before us His internal thought by giving to it an audible and sensible utterance. He was not content to reveal Himself through a mere corporeal voice, as when He spoke to men by the mouth of His Prophets, or as we do when we speak to our fellow-creatures. But He has expressed the thoughts of the Eternal Mind by clothing them with a visible and palpable form in the mystery of the Incarnation. "He has brought Himself thus within reach of the knowledge and intelligence of all mortal men, instructing through the eye, but not by

the ear.”¹ St. Chrysostom says that the heavens narrate to us the glory of God through the stars, which instruct not our ears, but our eyes. It is then in order to make Himself known to all equally, that He has spoken to our eyes and not to our ears, and that He has given to us all His visible Word.

Lastly, our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect image of His Father, which necessarily follows from His possessing specifically and numerically one and the self-same Divine Nature with Him. He is the splendour of the Father, the figure of His substance. *In unius Trinitate substantiæ, . . . in essentia unitas*, are Divine truths which every child of the Church must believe; although, of course, it is given to no man to realize all that these deep words contain in relation to the mystery of the Incarnation.

In the beautiful Preface of the Mass for Christmas Day we find this passage: “By the mystery of the Word made Flesh, the new light of Thy brightness hath shone upon the eyes of our minds; that while we behold God visibly, we may by Him be carried on to the love of things invisible.”

It is by means of this “new light” which God Incarnate brought into the world that we are enabled to know the beauty of the Father, and in our measure even to imitate His perfection. This likewise explains how our Lord could tell us to “be therefore perfect as also our Heavenly Father is perfect.”² If God the Father had not shown to us the perfect image and likeness of His perfection, how could we have imitated it? Thus when our Lord declared to His Father: “All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine,” He spoke as being His only-begotten and consubstantial

¹ St. Chrysost. Hom. 9. *Ad popul. Antioch.*

² St. Matt. v. 48.

Son, as His Eternal Word, Who could therefore use those expressions in the fullest extent of their significance. From all that has been said, it will be easy to understand whence flowed the beauty which was seen in the Sacred Humanity of Jesus and which has made "the whole world go after Him"—*Ecce mundus totus post eum abiit*.¹

We will now consider for a moment the intimate alliance of the Sacred Humanity with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. No link could possibly be closer than that which unites it to the Son, and consequently it participates in all that the Son possesses. A close association is also established between it and the Father, by very reason of its union with the Son; and, being united with the Father, Jesus Christ is inheritor of all the possessions of God. The alliance of the Sacred Humanity with the Holy Spirit is likewise one of great intimacy, since this Divine Spirit proceeds equally from the Father and the Son, and must consequently unite Himself to that Sacred Humanity with which the other two Divine Persons have entered into such close alliance. Where the Father is, there also is the Son, and there also the Holy Ghost. As the Father pours out into His Word His whole Divine Essence, so the Word sheds into the Sacred Humanity, hypostatically united to Him, all the riches of His Divine possessions; so that our Lord is penetrated and anointed with His own Divinity: *Christus unctus divinitate*.

Seeing that our object is to set before the reader the inherent beauty of the Man-God, we cannot dwell too carefully in our prefatory chapters on the Divine sources whence that beauty flowed, and so we quote

¹ St. John xii. 19.

another passage from the learned work already referred to, wherein the theology of the Hypostatic Union is admirably set forth.

“St. Bernard in his excellent sermon for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, *De Tribus Mixturis*, enumerates three admirable points of union to be observed by us in the mystery of the Incarnation. The first is the union of our Lord’s human Soul with His Sacred Body. What can be more admirable than the alliance thus formed between that blessed Soul and its mortal Body; even though it did not preserve the Body from suffering, after a manner, the pains of Hell; as Jesus Himself cries out, through the Psalmist: ‘The perils of Hell have found Me.’¹ Was not this truly realized in the bodily anguish of His Passion?

“The second union is that of the two Natures, the Divine and the Human, constituting an alliance of the finite with the infinite, of the Creator with the creature, of that which is All in all and that which is by comparison less than nothing. What can be more incomprehensible than this?

“But the third union, which is the most excellent and most incomprehensible of all, is the union established between the Human Nature and the Divine Person, without any mingling of the Human Nature with the Divine Nature; and this is called in theology the Hypostatic Union. . . .

“The stupendous miracle which God wrought in assuming our human nature is, that, in place of its receiving in Him a human subsistence of its own, and thus involving the existence of two Persons in Christ, He gave to it His own eternal subsistence, that of His one Divine Person. By this means the Sacred Humanity

¹ Psalm cxiv. 3.

subsists not naturally or separately of itself, *but through the Divine subsistence which is given to it*. It has personality by reason of its union with the Divine Person; it is true man possessing the substance and all the essential qualities of human nature, but it is not *personally* man, because it has no human person. There are in God Incarnate two substances and two complete Natures, the Divine and Human, but there is in Him only one Person, which is the Divine Person of the Son. We have then in the Hypostatic Union an admirable and adorable Person, a God-Man and a Man-God, . . . the Divine Person supplying the absence of the Human Personality in the Sacred Humanity of our Lord;"¹ and thus it is that everything in Him partakes in the dignity of His Divinity.

Need anything be added towards explaining more clearly those words of St. Paul: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally,"² for our full assurance that, since all the plenitude of the Divinity and consequently all the beauty of God dwells in the Humanity of our Lord, it imparts not only to His Soul but also to His Body an all-Divine loveliness, so that we behold in Him the realization and perfection of those ancient figures whose beauty enchains the eye of the soul ravished with the love of Jesus; but above all, we see in Him the "Image of the invisible God."³

God has willed that His Word should remain permanently expressed before us. It was not to be a voice which passes away, but an object ever present, appealing in the clearest language that can be conceived to the three powers of the soul.

By faith the memory travels back through the ages

¹ D'Argentan, *Les Grandeurs de Jesus Christ*.

² Coloss. ii. 9.

³ Coloss. i. 15.

that have passed, and views before it the Incarnate beauty of Him Who walked upon the earth and conversed with men. The intellect then contemplates the image of Him Who brought down to men a new idea of God, and by the loveliness of this image the will is set on fire and is borne upward to the love of "invisible things." Hence in some sort it is that, as the Father and the Son eternally contemplate each other's beauty, and thus together produce the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Love, so man's memory presenting before him the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, and his intellect contemplating the Incarnate Son of God, these two powers combine to elicit from the third, namely man's will, that love which bears upward the soul on high and unites it to God.

It may be objected that, if the Sacred Humanity was, as theology teaches, thus clothed, by right, with the Divine beauty, men could not endure the sight and live. In Father Jerome Nadal's *Introduction to the Passion*, we learn how we may surmount this difficulty with the greatest ease. "In the Soul of Christ," he says, "was the glory of Paradise and the plenitude of grace. But by a miracle this glory did not overflow into His Body, nor into His Soul as to its lower part, and this was ordained that God might be able to suffer according to His Humanity. For if God had not restrained the glory of the Soul of Christ, *that glory would have been communicated to His Body, and would have made His Soul blessed in every part*; nor would any created power have been able to hurt His blessed Humanity in the least degree."

Now this miracle was wrought by the Divine Person in His Sacred Humanity, Who prevented the beauty and splendour of the Godhead from being

manifested in all its fulness, veiling it by the flesh which He had taken, and permitting to appear before the eyes of men only so much as their condition, at the time, enabled them to bear. Thus did the Creator in His power and wisdom adapt Himself to the weakness of His creatures and become "a hidden God"—*Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator*.¹ The Divine beauty did in some degree shine forth from the human eyes, the Divine voice, which had thrilled through Adam's innocent soul as he walked with God "in the afternoon air" of Paradise, once more was heard in the human voice of Jesus, when by its tones it ravished the hearts of all who listened and impelled them to exclaim: "Never did man speak like this Man."² Yet so tempered was the Divine loveliness by the human character which God condescended to assume, so miraculously restrained was the splendour which otherwise would have flooded the Human form of our Divine Lord, that men could now gaze on it undazzled, unawed, even whilst their hearts were "burning within them as He spoke," burning with that fire which He came upon earth to kindle.

The Transfiguration was the only instance in which our Lord permitted some few rays of His Divine loveliness to escape; and we read, in the Gospel, what was the result of this manifestation to those chosen ones who beheld it. "They fell upon their face, and were very much afraid,"³ and "Peter knew not what he said, for they were struck with fear."⁴ Whence we may infer that the splendour of the Divine beauty was, in part at least, unveiled before them, and drew from St. Peter's lips the petition that he might make his tabernacle on the mount, saying: "It is good for us to be here."⁵

¹ Isaiah xlv. 15.² St. John vii. 46.³ St. Matt. xvii. 6.⁴ St. Mark ix. 4, 5.⁵ St. Luke ix. 33.

Father Faber speaks of the Transfiguration as being "the single instance in which the veils of humiliation were burned away, and the Human Nature persuaded to display those gifts which belonged to it in virtue of its union with the Word. Habitually it kept its own proper glory suppressed, as if it were a slumbering volcano within Him; and now on the top of Tabor a momentary eruption of its splendour was permitted."¹

¹ *Bethlehem*, c. vi. p. 330.

CHAPTER V.

ALL CREATED BEAUTY CENTRES ROUND THE INCARNATION.
THE CORDS OF ADAM.

ALTHOUGH the idea which the Patriarchs and Prophets entertained of the promised Messiah was full of the beauty they expected to see in Him, yet was it only vague and imperfect; the Jewish people generally setting their hearts upon splendour, riches, and the power belonging to a temporal king.

Berthier, commenting on these words of the One Hundred and Third Psalm, *Confessionem et decorem induisti, amictus lumine sicut vestimento*, says that "God has sent His Divine Word amongst us to operate in our souls that which the spectacle of His marvellous works of Creation had not been able to effect. Before Jesus Christ appeared in the world, God manifested Himself to the Patriarchs and to the Prophets under the symbols of light and of fire. He appeared to Moses in a burning bush; to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning; to Isaias, in a sanctuary where was an altar covered with coals of fire; to Ezechiel, in a bright cloud; to Daniel, upon a throne surrounded with flames. . . . Under the Ancient Law, the senses were acted upon by brilliant revelations; but under the New, it is the mind and the heart which are enlightened. The word of Jesus Christ is, as

the Prophet represents God Himself, 'invested with light;' and the Prince of the Apostles taught the faithful the same, when he told them that they had been 'called out of darkness into the marvellous light of God.'¹ And again, the beloved Apostle announced to his disciples: 'The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth;'² while the Apostle of the Gentiles warned the Ephesians: 'You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord.'"³

Yes, our Divine Lord came to enlighten the minds of men, and to correct that materialism which formed their creed even respecting Himself. Although they were to see God visibly, yet was He to wear a beauty far different from that which they sought to find in Him. He intended, it is true, to appeal to their outward senses, but it was only that, by this means, He might reach and captivate their hearts and minds. Their ideas of beauty had until then been very defective, and He came to open out before them a new world. They should learn henceforth to regard as lovely much that they had hitherto fled from with aversion, and so He beatified poverty and meek endurance of injuries, mourning, and the promoting of peace at personal cost, together with suffering persecution for justice' sake. All these virtues He would exhibit before them in His own Person, so that they might become beautified and deified by His touch. He condemned their eager looking out "for signs and wonders," as of old; and, whilst they were expecting brilliant manifestations of kingly power, He came in His meekness to draw them with the "cords of Adam, and the bands of love."⁴ By these He would fain attract all things to Himself, and

¹ 1 St. Peter ii. 9.

² 1 St. John ii. 8.

³ Ephes. v. 8.

⁴ Osee xi. 4.

willed that men should become sensible of an empire over them which before they had never known, a power which, in their wildest dreams, they had never been able to conceive—the power, namely, of the Everlasting God clothed in human flesh, with His eternal love and His human love throbbing in a human heart.

The “cords of Adam” by which God Incarnate was to draw the hearts of men to Himself, may be understood in two ways. They were, in the first place, the attractions which men would discover in Jesus Christ, and which, like cords, would have the force of drawing them to Him. These are called the cords of Adam because they were **destined to captivate** man’s human nature. ~~Had it been the angelic nature~~ God desired to attract, He need not have assumed human flesh; but, in willing to become like to us in everything save sin alone, He has completely won our sympathy; and, by taking a human heart, He has gained our hearts and our love. That which has given to our Lord such empire over the hearts of His creatures is the truth of His Humanity, furnished with all the properties and attributes of human nature, and with all the sensibilities of a human heart like to our own. It was thus that He adapted Himself to those whom He came to save, and taught them the new law of love. Formerly the Law had been written on tables of stone, but now it was to be engraved on their hearts of flesh: “I will give My law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people, . . . for all shall know Me from the least of them even to the greatest.”¹

Special laws of mercy had been enjoined regarding

¹ Jerem. xxxi. 33, 34.

the lepers, the poor, the widows; as also against oppression, false witness, and the like. But Jesus came on earth to persuade men to their observance, not only by the gracious words which fell from His sacred lips, but by the "new spirit" with which He would imbue their hearts, and impel them to do, for His love's sake, all that they had formerly done through fear of transgressing a stern and rigorous law. They were to see Him weep with those who wept, sympathizing with their sorrows—and who does not know the soothing balm that lies in human sympathy? They were to behold Him tenderly relieving the sick, and compassionating sinners and those despised and condemned by their fellow-creatures. They could not fail to learn that their God was just and gracious, hating iniquity; but, more than all, would they come to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet," that "their God is love," and their Saviour "beautiful above all the sons of men." It was not by one single cord alone that Jesus sought to draw all things to Himself, but by many—in *funiculis*—by all the perfections that should be visible in His Sacred Humanity, by the loveliness of His character, by the beauty of His Person, by the gentle tones of His voice, by the actions that He performed. All these were expressed by the words, *vinculis caritatis*; seeing that they were all inspired by a love both Divine and human, well calculated to draw every heart to love Him in return.

Another meaning which may be given to these words, implies that many things external to our Lord have become, through His Divine touch, cords, as it were, drawing souls to Him. The idea of all created loveliness encircles Him as its centre, and much that human nature shrank from, or regarded with aversion, before the coming of our Lord, has since, as we have

already said, been clothed with a beauty which contact with the Divine and Human Person alone could impart. The beauty of sorrow, of suffering in all its countless varieties, the dignity of virginity, the excellence of evangelical poverty, and the grandeur of life-long obedience were all in a manner unknown before the Incarnation of the Word; at Whose coming a wide-spread horizon opened out before the eyes of men, over which the beauty of Jesus has since been reflected like the golden loveliness of a summer sunset.

In Him the empire of beauty is acknowledged; in Him are fulfilled the words of the Forty-fourth Psalm: *Accingere gladio tuo super femur tuum, potentissime. Specie tua et pulchritudine tua intende, prospere procede, et regna.* This sword is His beauty, in the might of which He has set forth from the end of heaven—a *summo cælo egressio ejus*—and has established His reign amongst men. This is that “beautiful One walking in the greatness of His strength”—*iste formosus in stola sua, gradiens in multitudine fortitudinis suæ*;¹ Whose empire over hearts does but increase, though His apparel is red, and His garments are dyed with His Blood. There is not a lovely thing upon this earth of ours which is not a cord drawing us to Jesus, if we remember that it is in consequence of Him the world is so full of beauty. All things, either through their association with this Person, or through the relation they bear to His sojourn upon earth, speak to our hearts and minds of Him Who was King among all creatures.

St. Paul calls our Lord “the first-born of every creature”—*primo-genitus omnis creaturæ*;² yet generations had passed away since creation began, before He appeared amongst men. The Church, in her Nicene

¹ Isaias lxiii. 1.

² Coloss. i. 15.

Creed, explained these words after the same manner as St. Chrysostom; asserting Christ to be *Ex Patre natum ante omnia sæcula*. Nay, even as Man, Christ was the "first-born" in the mind of God, the head and centre of all creation.

When we propose to ourselves to accomplish some great work, the end we have in view is, so to speak, the *first-born* of our minds in the order of thought, although it takes the last place in the order of accomplishment; all that comes between is but a preparation for the attainment of the object we placed before us. This, in some sort, explains the order of things in the operations of Divine intelligence. Jesus Christ was the end of all the works of God; all things were created in view of Him; and all the ages that preceded His coming were but a preparation for the entrance into the world of this first-born among creatures, in the Eternal Mind. Thus it is that the whole of nature is a perpetual memorial of Him for Whom it was created. The mountains clothed with verdure, and the valleys with flowers, the rushing waters with their white foam sparkling in the sunlight, the gorgeous plumage and the melodious song of birds, the firmament with its world of beauty, and the mighty ocean with its mysterious depths—all were clothed with the loveliness with which we see them invested, because of Him Who was to come and dwell in this vast universe, Whose palace it was for a time to be.

This view of the primary cause of so much beauty in creation need not diminish, in any way, our gratitude. What was all the created beauty which awaited the Son of God here below, in comparison with the uncreated beauty wherewith He was eternally invested? Again, if all was not primarily designed for us in the

mind of God, He has willed that we should share the good things of our Elder Brother, and enter into possession of the riches prepared for Him. Well might our contemplation delight to dwell on the thought of the complacency of God, when, resting on the first great Sabbath, He gazed upon the finished work of that creation which His word had called forth, and the motive of which had been His own Incarnate and only-begotten Son.

Thus it is that all which is beautiful upon earth refers to Him, and leads up to Him, since everything was created for Him. If the beautiful fails in producing this result, it fails in its mission, so far as we are concerned; and it is to be remarked, that the keener and more intense the appreciation of beauty is, the stronger will be the yearning of the soul after something further, something higher, suggested and reflected by the material beauty which meets the eye. Now, this strong yearning is nothing less than the craving of the human heart and soul for the possession of that Supreme Beauty which alone can satiate them.

Men weary not of striving to reproduce, in every possible form, the ideal which has, as it were, enthralled them since the "Beautiful One" by excellence walked upon the earth. Christian art has derived its sublimest inspirations and most noble conceptions from the God Who "was seen and Who conversed with men," and from the mysteries which are interwoven with His Incarnation. Whilst the imitation of His life and actions is a still higher and more spiritual expression of the appreciation which the human soul has formed of the beauty which was manifested in Him.

CHAPTER VI.

MEDITATION ON THE BEAUTY OF JESUS IS VERY OFTEN
VAGUE, GENERAL, AND SUPERFICIAL.

JESUS CHRIST is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End; "He Who is before all,"¹ and is the aim and purpose of all the works of the Father, in nature and in grace; the Eternal Son of God, made Incarnate in the midst of time, the centre around which every creature, that preceded and that has followed His coming, gravitates; the primary cause of the beauty of all things; the object Whose surpassing loveliness fixed on it the Eternal gaze and complacency of God, whilst yet He held Him in His everlasting mind, and afterwards when He spoke from the cloud and gave testimony to Him as His only-begotten Son, in Whom He was well pleased. Is it not easily seen that He of Whom all these things are declared should be not only the centre around which all creation circles, but also the point of attraction for the thoughts of every human mind, and the affections of every human heart? Yet His reign is still far from being established over all hearts, and the cry of our souls must be, as ever: *Adveniat regnum tuum*. Even among persons professing piety, who are really leading to some extent spiritual lives, this absence of intelligent devotion is a defect

¹ Coloss. i. 17.

which renders their spirituality less solid and fruitful than it might be, were their knowledge of His grandeurs more enlarged and comprehensive.

Wherefore, in order to love our Lord intensely and fully appreciate His beauty, we should endeavour to learn all we can about Him, we should consider the marvellous fruit of the Hypostatic Union between His Humanity and the Divine Word, and the closeness of His union with the Father and the Holy Spirit, whence flowed the spiritual gifts residing, in all their plenitude, within His adorable and blessed Soul. We believe that it is because we are so little habituated to think of our Lord's claims upon our love from a theological point of view, that our knowledge of Him is frequently so superficial and our devotion, shall we say it, so unpractical. Books of piety abound, but there are few in which theological truth concerning our Lord is interwoven with devotional sentiment; yet the former is the only secure and solid basis of the latter.

Another cause to which we believe the inadequate appreciation of our Lord's virtues and excellences may be referred, is the exceedingly small amount of meditation bestowed upon the text of the Gospels, which rises only to the level of a bare reading of those sacred records of the life and work of our Lord upon earth. There are, in fact, many persons who have been in the habit of communicating several times a week, and whose lives have been in accordance with so pious a practice, yet for whom the Gospel narratives are but an unknown world of beauty waiting, it may be, to burst upon them, when some happy circumstance or other shall unlock the sacred pages for them, before their life has wholly ebbed away.

Those given to piety possess prayer-books of

every kind. We have heard of one who, on returning from the convent school to her father's house, brought fourteen or fifteen such works, besides devotional books of other descriptions. Manuals for meditation, too, of every variety are plentiful, and somewhat largely patronized; and it cannot be denied that many persons find such books necessary in order to direct their thoughts, and to instruct them how to apply sacred truths to their own spiritual profit. We are far from discouraging the use of such works, but only regret the substitution of them for the Gospel narrative itself. The latter tells the history of the three-and-thirty years as it was inspired to the Evangelists to write it; and there is not a statement, be it ever so apparently trivial, which is not replete with beautiful significance.

We shall have much to say upon this point in the second part of our work. What is, at present, to be remarked is that the prayerful study of the Gospel history would greatly aid the attainment of a more solid and intelligent appreciation of the beauty of Jesus; especially, if such meditation were accompanied by reflection upon the Divine truths regarding Him which are contained in the Creeds, the various parts of the Mass, and other channels of dogmatic instruction open to every child of the Church, and necessary to be believed by them.

It is true that the restlessness, which prevents the mind from attaching itself to any supernatural subject, and appears to increase in proportion to the growth of a passion for selfish and frivolous enjoyment, constitutes a material obstacle to meditation of any kind, and almost precludes the possibility of drawing definite conclusions regarding the claims of Jesus upon our love, from the Gospel narratives, or from the Divine

truths familiarly set before us by the Church. Yet this prevailing obstacle is not, after all, insuperable; and in numerous instances probably, if the attention were but directed to these sources of living truth, the interest would be awakened, and from thence new and unsuspected light would dawn upon many minds, and new fountains of true devotion be opened in innumerable hearts.

Again, even where meditation is to some extent a habit, it is too frequently cursory and superficial. A subject, which might well afford abundant matter for many days' prayer or meditation, is rapidly scanned at a glance in the space of half an hour, or, at the utmost, of an hour. In such a method of regarding Divine things how much beauty is overlooked, how many revelations of the character of Jesus ignored, how many truths of gravest import and touching significance lie undiscovered. It is not that a great effort of the intellect is necessary; it is rather a loving attention of the heart which is required. "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."¹ But, in order to be able to effect this, there must be the knowledge of the mysteries, the words, the subjects upon which the heart is to ponder, or, following more closely the meaning of the word *conferens*, is to compare them one with another. This, we may believe, our Lady did when, seeing the mysteries of the Incarnation, she compared them with the ancient prophecies and figures; and, in looking on the lowliness of her Divine Son, she drew the contrast between His present condition and that which belonged to Him, as God, from all eternity; and murmured in her heart, during her sublime and simple contemplation of God in His abasements:

¹ St. Luke ii. 19.

“Thy throne is prepared from of old, Thou art from everlasting.”¹

Those for whom the Life of Jesus, as narrated in the Gospel, has become a centre of attraction, have indeed found a rich mine containing an inexhaustible treasure. For them the sacred page is illuminated with a bright light, from the midst of which the beauty of our Lord will shine forth in every incident and word and action that is recorded, nay, in the least gesture or movement of His Person.²

In no book of formal meditation could the Divine and Human loveliness of the Incarnate God be drawn out, as it is by the inspired writers. Nowhere else could the Divine character of all He wrought or spoke be similarly illustrated; and hence it is to be regretted that the Gospels are not more widely explored for purposes of meditation, in order to attain a clearer knowledge of our Lord's beauty, and consequently a more intelligent and intensified devotion to Him personally.

¹ Psalm xcii. 2.

² The word *Person* is here used to express our Lord's Humanity which appeared visibly before men, though there was in Him no personality, save that of the Divine Person clothed in human flesh.



PART II.

CHAPTER I.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS LOVE OF THE FATHER.

I and the Father are one (St. John x. 30).

THERE are few things which elicit more intelligent appreciation on the part of men than lifelong devotedness to a noble object. The act of self-sacrifice, perhaps we should say of self-oblivion, accompanying the consecration of the whole life to a single aim commands the reverence of the intellect, if not in all cases the sympathy of the heart. Granted, that this can be truly said of men in relation to their fellows and equals; what shall be said, when the same principle is laid down in respect of Him Who is both God and Man.

In the present chapter, we are about to consider in the Soul of our Divine Lord that which may be regarded as the centre, around which all that we can know here below of His loveliness revolves; as the source, in one sense, from which His other beauties flow. Be it remembered, we say *in one sense*, which means that to the love of the Father may be primarily referred all His sorrows and His joys, His abasements and the exercise of His

power, His words of thrilling beauty, His actions and His fears, and everything, besides, by which He has established His reign over our hearts, or manifested to men the loveliness of God. In another sense, as has been laid down in the prefatory chapters of this work, and as will be drawn out more fully in its due place, the beauty of Jesus is to be attributed to the inherent lustre and loveliness of the Word to which His Humanity is hypostatically united, and to the riches which are shed into His Soul by the Word, in consequence of that union. But, in addition to all that personal sanctity and beauty which our Lord possessed, as the uncreated Son of God, He enjoyed also the plenitude of sanctifying grace, without which He would not have had all the perfection possible; seeing that His Soul would have been deprived of what theologians term *formal* sanctity, that, namely, which belongs to the soul itself. The divinized Soul of Jesus was sanctified by the Holy Spirit, even as we are sanctified; and thus, when we are contemplating the beauty of the Incarnate God, we must remember the double anointing which His Humanity enjoyed: first, that of the uncreated sanctity of the Eternal Son, which is exclusively His own, inasmuch as He is God; and secondly, that of the indwelling and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, which was given to Him without measure.

We are now in a position to contemplate with reverence the working of that love of God in the Soul of Jesus, which was inherent in Him as being God Himself, one and the same Essence with the Father; and which, in His Human Heart, partook of a human character, so that it has become comprehensible to creatures such as we are. From the first moment of the Incarnation the Soul of Jesus loved God with a

love proportionable to its beatific and infused knowledge; and it is the exercise of that love, which ranks first among the beauties of the Sacred Humanity, that we now propose to consider in the following pages.

The love of the Father was, in the Soul of Jesus, what a master-passion would be in the soul of a simple creature. The term "passion" is not, in this sense, permitted in connection with our Lord, inasmuch as passion implies concupiscence; but in its stead theologians employ the word *pro-passio*, in order to express the intensity (which in Him was a perfection) of the different affections with which His Human Heart throbbed, causing it, out of its abundance, to speak through His eyes, and to sweat blood through the pores of His whole Body.

Although our Lord is by Divine Nature the true Son of His Eternal Father, He became likewise as Man the source of our adoption through sanctifying grace, "the first-born amongst many brethren." It is in Him that we see most fully and beautifully exemplified the "spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)."¹ The whole tenderness and beauty of the character of the Incarnate Son shine forth in that filial love of the Father, which was the spring of all He spoke and wrought and suffered upon earth. The turning of His Soul, if we may so express it, was ever towards His Father. This was its abiding attitude. There are innumerable characteristics which might have been recorded of our Lord in the Gospels, and yet are not recorded; but the Holy Spirit has been lavish in inspiring the Evangelists to leave us abundant traces of the Divine and human love of Jesus for His Eternal Father. Contemplatives have delighted in picturing

¹ Romans viii. 15, 29.

Him to themselves lisping His first word, whilst His childish gaze was uplifted towards that Father to Whom it was addressed. Not recurring now to the devout contemplations of the saints and servants of God, we shall confine ourselves to the Gospel narrative itself as authority for all that is here laid down.

Now, the first recorded word which Jesus spoke bore reference to His Father, and was of such a nature, and spoken under such circumstances, that it may be regarded as the key-note of all those which He afterwards uttered until, hanging on the Cross, He breathed His last sigh, still murmuring that name in death: *Nesciebatis, quia in his quæ Patris mei sunt oportet me esse*—"Did you not know, that I must be about My Father's business?"¹ Yes, it was His Father's business which brought Him upon earth. This was the work before Him, as He lay yet a helpless Babe in Bethlehem, as He toiled in Joseph's workshop during the long Hidden Life at Nazareth, as He taught in the Temple, suffered the ignominies of His Passion, and finally expired on the Cross. If we would see in all its perfection the fruit of the gift of piety, we must contemplate it as manifested in the love of Jesus for the Eternal Father.

In His first recorded word, just referred to, are found the precise elements of that love which the gift of piety produces—adoration, praise, and the spirit of self-sacrifice resulting from a perfect and intense appreciation of the claims of the object beloved. This supreme motive has urged Him to apparent forgetfulness of that Mother, whose claims upon His filial piety rank next after those of God His Father. In order to accomplish the will of that Father, and to fulfil His eternal designs, He hesitates not to become a cause of sorrow

¹ St. Luke ii. 49.

to His sinless Mother, and to deepen the wound in her already sword-pierced soul. This is the spirit of self-sacrifice in its most refined and exacting form; and the occasion on which our Divine Lord spoke these words was, as we have said, a prelude to all those that were to follow, wherein should be manifested that love of the Father which was an inexhaustible fountain of beauty within His Soul. Self-abnegation, perfected in our Lord unto self-immolation and self-annihilation, is the silent acknowledgment of a claim superior to those of self. In the Soul of the Incarnate Son it comprised adoration, praise, and submission, as the outcome of a burning love which was elicited from the gift of piety poured into His Soul, together with the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in all their plenitude.

In the Thirty-ninth Psalm, which specially refers to our Lord, we read these prophetic words: *In capite libri scriptum est de me, ut facerem voluntatem tuam: Deus meus volui, et legem tuam in medio cordis mei.*

Now, one of the most striking and at the same time most beautiful features in our Divine Lord, was the fulfilment, throughout His whole life, of each section of this prophecy. In the first place, not a tittle of that eternal will was by Him left unaccomplished, as to the letter; in the next, there was not a single instant of the three-and-thirty years in which that law failed to be "desired with desire," in the depths of the Sacred Heart.

If we may reverently make any distinction here, of all the words which fell from the lips of Jesus those which bore a special reference to the Father and to the fulfilment of His will seem the most beautiful. We do not dwell upon them now, since they will receive particular notice elsewhere, but we would fain pause

a moment to remark on the submission of the human will of Jesus to the will of His Father, and on the intensity of desire with which He thirsted for its perfect accomplishment, from the point of view from which we purpose, in these pages, to regard our Lord and all that was made manifest in Him. It is true that His submission or obedience may be referred to the gift of holy fear, which yielded in His Blessed Soul no less beautiful fruit than did His filial piety; but it is rather, as the outpouring of His tender love towards His Father, that we desire at present to contemplate it.

We have said that adoration and praise are essential elements in the gift of piety, the producè of which is love. Now the highest form of adoration is submission, acquiescence, total abandonment of will to the will of the object beloved. The blessed who are prostrate before the Throne, casting down their crowns before Him Who sits thereon, have no other will than His; and their love has attained its highest and most perfect form, that of adoration. So with the Incarnate Son, the Saint of saints, Whose perfect and exact knowledge makes plain before Him the will of His Father in all its loveliness, throughout the three-and-thirty years, during which His Soul failed not, a single instant, in its loving praise and adoration of that will, or in desire for its most perfect accomplishment. "With desire I have desired," He might have said, not only upon the occasion on which He spoke these words, but in respect of every point that referred to the fulfilment of His Father's will. This desire it was that rendered sweet to His Heart the inhospitality and privation of Bethlehem, and His exile into Egypt, and the long inward crucifixion of His life at Nazareth. This will of His Father it was that He adored in the ignominy of the Passion,

when the world seemed to triumph, and when, with His thirst for souls unsatisfied, He expired upon the Cross.

Our Lord not only recognized as Man His dependence upon His Father, but His love caused Him to delight in that dependence. Such delight we see manifested on several occasions wherein He openly displayed His dependence either by word or deed—for example when He gave thanks to His Father aloud at the raising of Lazarus, when He praised Him for having revealed His marvels to “little ones,” as also when He declared His inability to do anything of Himself; although indeed this last expression admits of another interpretation, as will be shown in its due place.

From the manger to the Cross, in His sufferings as in His joys, in silence or in action, in every phase and circumstance of His life, the cry of the Heart of Jesus was that of the Son by excellence addressing His Father. His words, even when they did not expressly refer to Him, had for their aim but the Father's glory. This was the master-thought of His mind, the master-love of His Heart, and so it was the spring of all His actions, the motive of His journeyings, the source of His tears and sighs, and, as we have seen, the object of His first, as it was of His last recorded word. The Father's will had been His crucifixion from Bethlehem to Calvary, nevertheless it was into the hands of that Father, Who had seemed to be without pity for this His only-begotten Son, that He would commend His Spirit: *Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*. Beautiful words, to be adopted by generation after generation of sons whose hearts, having caught the spirit of their Elder Brother, have had for their master-love the Father and the Father's

will. Let us pray the Spirit of Love to pour into our hearts the gift of filial piety, and let us assure ourselves that our devotion to the Eternal Father will be deep, in proportion as our union with the Heart of the Son becomes closer and more intense.

At the commencement of the present chapter, we commented on the beauty of that self-oblivion which is the characteristic of devoted love, and which we see in all its perfection in the love of Jesus towards His Eternal Father. Throughout His Public Life, He speaks of Himself as one "Sent," as one to Whom a definite work has been entrusted, as having come in the name of His Father. If He insists on His unity with the Father, it is that the Father may be glorified in Him, and by Him; for he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father Who hath sent Him. All faith in Him the Son, and love of Him, is to end in the Father; for this alone He claims the belief of men in Himself, and in His works. If His judgment is just, it is because He seeks not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. If He bears witness of Himself, He says His witness is not true, but the Father Himself Who hath sent Him hath given testimony of Him; and the works, which the Father hath given Him to perfect, bear the like witness.

When the Jews ask Him what they shall do that they may work the works of God, He tells them that the work of God is to believe in Him Whom the Father hath sent. It is His Father, He tells them, Who gives them the true bread from Heaven. His doctrine, He says, is not His, but the doctrine of Him Who sent Him; and those only who do the Father's will can recognize His doctrine to be Divine. He tells

them that, if He glorifies Himself, His glory is nothing ; but it is His Father Who glorifies Him—that He honours His Father and seeks not His own glory

Thus it was that He, Who lived for thirty years in obscurity and silence, Who, moreover, maintained silence even amidst His active works, and in the presence of His enemies, when there was question of His own honour, yet spoke openly and fully when the glory of the Father demanded it, and in language which testified the love that consumed Him and the insatiable thirst of His Sacred Heart for the accomplishment of the work for which He was sent, “that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.”¹ But, before the time had arrived when our Lord testified by His words the one aim and end of all He wrought on earth, there was another and beautiful witness to the desire which burned within Him for the glorification of the Father : and with the notice of this we shall close our chapter.

We have seen that the Soul of Jesus was filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in all their perfection, consequently with the gift of holy filial fear, among the rest. But although this holy fear produced in the Soul of God Incarnate a profound horror of sin, there could not be in Him that dread of personal sin which it would be the special property of such fear to produce in the soul of a saint. Thus, when we read in the Gospel that our Lord imposed silence on those who had witnessed His miracles, or that He immediately retired to the desert, or hid Himself when they would have made Him King, or when, in their admiration at what they had seen, they proclaimed that a great Prophet had risen up amongst them, which led to His

¹ St. John xvii. 3.

withdrawing Himself from them, we are not to suppose that an impulse to vainglory, or the faintest shadow of human satisfaction, could find entrance into His all-holy Soul. No, the cause of His withdrawing from those who had received or had witnessed His miraculous cures must be attributed to the master-love we have been considering, and to the zeal which it inspired for His Father's glory as the sole object of His desires.

Little did He heed that the people were in admiration at the marvels they saw Him perform. His own glory was nothing to Him, neither did He "seek it from men."¹ What was it to Him that they were ready to honour Him as a great Prophet, since they would not glorify His Father by believing it to be through the Father's power in Him that He wrought the works they witnessed? What did it avail even that they glorified God "Who gave such power to men,"² when they refused to recognize, in the works of the Man before them, the action of the Father working through Him? It was because they would not believe that the many good works they saw Him perform were from the Father—"Many good works I have showed you from My Father;"³ it was because they would not accept the testimony of the works as evidence of the Father being in Him, that He retired from those who were willing, indeed, to give Him such glory as they gave to one another, but refused to honour the Father in Him.

Such then was the spirit of filial love, which abode in all its perfection and plenitude in the "First-born among many brethren;" and was from Him to flow down upon all who should hereafter receive the spirit

¹ St. John v. 41.

² St. Matt. ix. 8.

³ St. John x. 32.

of sons by adoption. Such was the spirit of the Baptist, from whose lips it found expression in words indicating the character of his whole life: "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above, is above all."¹ Such also was the spirit of the Chief of the Apostles, who, when he saw all the people running to him and John after the miraculous cure of the lame man at the Temple gate, and gazing on them with wonder, exclaimed in holy zeal for His Master's honour: "Ye men of Israel, why wonder ye at this, or why look you upon us, as if by our own strength or power we had made this man to walk?"² He then goes on to assure them that the God of their fathers had in this marvellous work glorified His Son Jesus, Whom they had denied.

Such again was the spirit of Paul and Barnabas, to whom the people of Lystra would have sacrificed as to gods, when they had witnessed, at the hands of Paul, the cure of the cripple from his birth. "Rending their clothes, they leaped out among the people crying, in holy jealousy for the glory of God: Ye men, why do you these things? We also are mortals, men like to you, preaching to you to be converted from these vain things to the living God, Who made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them."³ Age after age has witnessed new generations of sons born to the Father, in whose souls resides the spirit of adoption, whereby they give testimony that they are the sons of God and true brethren of Jesus, the cry of Whose Soul, throughout the three-and-thirty years of His life on earth, was "Father," and His work that Father's glory.

¹ St. John iii. 30, 31.

² Acts iii. 12, 13.

³ Acts xiv. 13, 14.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS LOVE OF SOULS.

*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life
for his friends (St. John xv. 13).*

IN the preceding chapter we have said that the love of the Father in the Soul of the Incarnate Son was the well-spring from which, in one sense, every other beauty flowed that we have seen manifested in the Sacred Humanity. We have also traced to this source the stress laid by our Lord on the fact of His unity with the Father—a unity of nature and of operation, together with His desire that His Divinity should be recognized by men.

Now, if our Lord left nothing undone or unsaid, which could induce men to recognize in Himself the power of God the Creator of all things, in order that His Father might be glorified through Him; no less zealous was He, from the same motive, that they should recognize in Himself God the Saviour and the Sanctifier of His people. If, for example, in His miracles He taught that the Father worked along with Him in the order of nature, and that He could do nothing of Himself; if He rebuked the winds and stilled the storm, that He might manifest the Divine power within Him which had called all things forth from nothing, He equally manifested the power of the

Father as residing in Him—the Son, in the supernatural order of redemption, when He called forth another and a spiritual world out of the nothingness of sin, and transformed it by the might of His Divine beauty into a world of saints.

When our Lord tells us that He Himself is the true Vine, He adds: “And My Father is the husbandman” —*et Pater meus agricola est.*¹ Now the masterpiece of the hand of the Divine Husbandman has been to graft on the true Vine, which is His own Eternal Son, our human nature, so that in the Person of the Word the Divine and Human Natures are united—and united so intimately that all becomes common between them. “All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine: and I am glorified in them”²—so glorified, because the power and beauty and every perfection of the Divine Nature are manifested in Him. Thus the natural order of things is inverted, inasmuch as here it is the Vine which elevates and gives a Divine character to the graft, instead of the graft elevating the produce of the stem. Our Lord goes on to say: “In this is My Father glorified; that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples.” These words not only point out, once more, the ultimate end to which He refers His wonderful works of salvation and sanctification, namely, the glorification of His Father; but they also indicate more particularly our present subject—the yearning of the Saviour’s Heart to pour out upon the branches the abundance of that sap of life, which He possessed in all its plenitude within Himself.

In considering the immensity of the love of Jesus for men, we must remember that He loved them as God their Creator, as God their Saviour, as God their

¹ St. John xv. 1. ² St. John xvii. 10.

Sanctifier; and, moreover, with the perfect love of a perfect human soul. And He acted, in their regard, in accordance with each of these sources of His love in detail, and with all of them together.

First, He loved them as the work of His hands. But who could know, as He knew, whereof they were made; or feel towards them, as He felt, in the fulness of His knowledge, and in His right of Creatorship over them? Again, He loved them as sheep wandering without a shepherd, for whose sake He had, whilst in the bosom of the Father, not only consented to become the bearer of salvation, but had, as the Wisdom of the Father, counselled the decree by which He was to descend on earth, and save men through suffering and shame. He loved them also as their Sanctifier, knowing the needs and temptations of all, and each; and yearning to infuse into their souls those varied and superabundant graces which resided in Him, as Head, in all their fulness, that they might fructify His members. And lastly, He loved them with the affections of His Human Heart and Human Soul as His brethren, co-heirs of the same Heavenly Father, and of the same everlasting Kingdom.

There is nothing which glorifies the Son of God so immensely, nothing which reveals so manifestly the Divinity of Jesus Christ, as the salvation and sanctification of souls. He alone can form saints, because He alone can make known to men the perfections of God His Father; and it is through Him only that the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, is poured out into our hearts. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, Who is given to us."¹ Having received the spirit of adoption of sons, and so been made joint heirs with Christ, we have within us the

¹ Romans v. 5.

germ of that likeness to Him wherein our sanctification consists. Now, the work of love which Jesus desires to effect in each one of us is to diffuse into our souls that life which He said He came to give us "more abundantly,"¹ that is, more abundantly than had been bestowed on those who lived before He came to establish the law of grace and love.

Bearing in mind the Divine and human love of our Lord towards us, and the gifts bestowed on His Sacred Humanity which enabled Him through the beatific vision, and through the knowledge infused by God into His Human Soul from the first moment of His conception, to know mankind generally and each one amongst us, as God only can know us, what does His love prompt Him to do? He descends from Heaven and dwells amongst us, to become one of the great human family, to converse with men, to employ in the cause of their salvation not only these two sources of His knowledge, but also that acquired and experimental knowledge, which He was to possess in all its perfection. It was not that He Himself stood in any need of them, since He was the Light of light—*Lumen de lumine*, and inherited, by reason of His union with the Word, all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God; but it was in order that, as St. Thomas says, there might not be in His Human Soul the least imperfection.²

¹ St. John x. 10.

² Without claiming any infallible certainty for their statement, theologians place under three heads the sources of the knowledge possessed by our Lord as Man: (1) That which comes to Him through the Beatific Vision; (2) That which by Divine gift is infused into His Soul, either *per se*, as reaching to the very essence of things and unattainable by any mere natural process, or *per accidens*, when it lies within the reach of natural processes, but is given in anticipation of their slow working; (3) Experimental knowledge, being such as is acquired directly or indirectly from experience.

Our Lord derived His experimental knowledge from the use of His senses, from His communication with creatures, from His actual experience of all the infirmities and miseries to which human nature is subject. It is only in this last sense that He can be said to "increase," for, from the first moment of His conception, He was replenished with the two sources of knowledge named above, so that these could receive no further development by means of any knowledge that might come to Him experimentally during His mortal life. When the Gospel tells us that He "advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men," it means only that He gradually acquired by successive stages of experience the practical knowledge of that which He already knew from the very beginning was awaiting Him, and in accordance with this fact, He manifested exteriorly, in proportion as His age matured, the treasures of grace and wisdom that were always dwelling within Him.

It is by His experimental knowledge that He has, more than by all the other grandeurs of His Soul—however intrinsically more excellent—wound Himself round the hearts of men and attracted them to Himself. It is one of the "cords of Adam" by which He has drawn us to His Heart and made us feel that we are not alone in our sorrows, because our Elder Brother Himself has suffered, and has been "encompassed with infirmity."

This probably may be, in part, the reason why a greater number of persons are more powerfully affected by the Sacred Passion than by any other portion of our Lord's life. Comparatively few can grasp the mental

anguish which, from the beginning, in consequence of the fulness of His infused knowledge, was His abiding portion. But when they contemplate that venerable Head actually pierced with thorns, the cruel torment of which He nevertheless knew well by anticipation; when they behold Him, in the weakness of His Flesh, writhing beneath the multiplied blows of the scourge which had ever been present to His mind; when they see Him expiring amid outrages, a victim to every kind of suffering, and submitting Himself to that death, for the coming of which He had been so "straitened," as He said, when expressing His ardent desire that His Human Nature should experience the sufferings of which He had been ever cognizant; when they contemplate Him proving His love by Himself enduring these sad details of the punishment due to our sins, a new intelligence is awakened within them revealing all the mystery of the love of God for man.

By His beatific and infused knowledge indeed, our Lord foreknew, whilst yet in His Mother's womb, the circumstances amidst which He should be born, and the rejection He was about to meet with in Bethlehem. But His experimental knowledge would cause Him to feel the cold blast of the winter wind and the more bitter coldness of His creatures' hearts, when His Blessed Mother could find no better shelter for her Babe than a ruined stable, on the dark, bleak night of His Nativity. In like manner He knew beforehand the malice of the Jews, the cowardliness of many who had begun to walk with Him, the treason of Judas, and every other bitter sorrow of His life; but the practical effect of these things, as well as of the physical sufferings He was to

endure, would be brought home to Him by His experimental knowledge, in which He was destined to go on increasing until the last agonized "loud voice" upon the Cross.

Exceedingly beautiful is it to note the manner in which our Lord applies each kind of science, residing within Him, to satisfy the demands of His love for us, and at the same time to make us recognize that love. We hope to dwell on this more fully, when we consider our Lord's relations with those amongst whom He dwelt during His life on earth. It is sufficient, for the present, to remark that the ingenuity—if we may so speak—with which He rendered His knowledge of the human heart in general, and of every soul in particular, subservient to His love, was one of its most striking characteristics as well as of its most touching beauties.

We are not purposing to write a book of formal meditations. Our aim is rather to suggest matter for reflection, when regarding our Lord from a point of view best calculated to engage the heart, as well as the intellect. But if it had entered into our design to make practical application of what has been said, how much might be deduced from the truths that have been just laid down. As it is, however, we prefer the plan of simple suggestion, believing that for many minds this helps better to the acquisition of a habit of meditation and a spirit of prayer and recollection.

As when travelling we often catch a passing glimpse of some narrow and lonely valley stretching far away between wood-clad hills, and seeming in the dim distance to emerge into richer beauties, partially indeed

concealed from us, yet appealing to our sense of the beautiful and creating within us a yearning to explore the vista of which our view has been all too transient; so is it with the loveliness of Jesus, which the Divine teaching unfolds to us. We long to know more, we linger wistfully on the loveliness which His words and works reveal, and we fain would penetrate into His interior, to that treasure-house of beauty where the Saints have found their thirst satisfied and yet, by a marvel of Divine love, never satiated. There is here no mere speculation, no danger of finding our expectations not fully realized; the deeper we penetrate, the vaster will be the horizon opened out to us and the more engaging the charms spread before our eyes.

One word more ere we close this chapter on the Beauty of the love of Jesus for souls. We often hear of "attractions of grace," of the particular devotion of individual souls to certain mysteries of the Incarnation, to certain phases or circumstances in the life of Jesus, or it may be to some particular words which fell from His lips, or actions which He wrought. Now, there are many persons who either feel these attractions in themselves or discern them in others, without ever referring them to their truest source, or regarding them as a part of the economy of the love of the Incarnate God, by which He reveals His yearning desire to draw the hearts of His creatures to Himself.

His knowledge enables Him to perceive the necessities of each one, for He Himself has created man. He knows, moreover, the circumstances by which each one is now, and will be hereafter, surrounded, the peculiar temptations and difficulties which he must in the present and the future overcome, and He gives to each one that special attraction for certain mysteries

and events of His life, or for certain words or acts, by which He may draw each to Himself, when without this attraction that person would either have fallen away altogether, or at least never have attained the degree of sanctity destined for him. It is the touch of the finger of the right hand of God, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Love Who dwells in Him in all Its plenitude, to be poured out by and through Him upon souls, to each according to their capacity of receiving It, imparting to each one the grace of attraction most fitted to him, most adapted to his peculiar wants, most conducive to exercise over his whole life a strong and enduring influence.

We see this in the lives of the Saints. To some our Lord has revealed, for instance, the beauty of His Divine Infancy, so that it has become the centre around which their whole spiritual life revolved. To others He has given the understanding of some particular word which fell from His lips, so that it has become permanently engraven on their souls, and productive of the blessed results our Lord designed when He communicated to them a perception of depths in the beauty of that word, which it has not been given to others to discern. For others, again, their absorbing meditation will turn on some portion of the Sacred Passion, which sheds a deeply-shaded light over their whole lives, imparting to them its own tender and sympathetic colouring. Each and all of these *attractions*, as they are familiarly termed, are ingenuities whereby the love of Jesus enables us to recognize His beauty and the beauty of His love towards us, and draws our souls to Himself with "the cords of Adam," after the plan of His eternal wisdom.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TRUTH.

The truth shall make you free (St. John viii. 32).

THERE are perhaps few formulas more expressive and, at the same time, more consoling than that which every child of the Church repeats so constantly: "O my God, I believe in Thee because Thou art Truth itself, and cannot deceive or be deceived; and I believe all that Thy Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed it." The more deeply the full meaning of these words is impressed upon the soul, the more confirmed will be our growth in the virtues of hope and charity, and the greater our capacity for drinking from "the Saviour's fountains" and receiving within us the gifts of His Holy Spirit.

It is not the precise object of the present chapter to speak of the power or of the authority of our Lord, although both are so closely allied with the truth which He came into the world to testify that they are, in fact, inseparable one from another.¹ We shall endeavour, however, later on to draw attention to the particular attractiveness of both His power and His authority, aiming at present at the elucidation, as far as may be, of the beauty of His Truth.

We speak of our Lord as being the Truth, instead of describing His truthfulness, because He is Truth

¹ St. John xviii. 37.

itself, even as He is Life and Beauty and Power, so that every word He uttered and every action He wrought emanated from the principle of Truth within Him, from "the Spirit of Truth" which rested on Him in all its plenitude. Thus, when our Lord performed acts of justice or uttered expressions of severity, of tender compassion, reproach, or sweetness, these were all substantially acts of strictest Truth, and could not be otherwise in consequence of the principle whence they flowed—a fact which adds immensely to their intrinsic beauty, inasmuch as there could be found in them no shadow of either designed deception or accidental error.

Such immunity as this from error of every possible kind or degree is a special prerogative belonging to the Sacred Humanity and a consequence of the Hypostatic Union. This is the Truth "as it is in Jesus," due not to the requirements merely of His human intellect and will, but to the exigencies of a Divine Person. This truth is no other than the Truth as it is in the Divine Essence, the attribute of Truth being of the very Essence of God. As therefore the Father is Truth eternally generating the Son and thus communicating to Him His whole Divine Essence, so the Son is Truth; and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from both the Father and the Son, is likewise Truth. Hence when we speak of the Truth "as it is in Jesus," we indicate nothing less than the Truth as it is in God, one of the Divine attributes made manifest to us in the Person of the Incarnate Son.

Now, truthfulness even as we see it in imperfect natures, in ourselves for instance, possesses an indescribable charm, though found in the midst of many defects. It is the outcome of a certain simplicity

which sin or the world has as yet left unharmed. There is truthfulness in speech, and truthfulness in manner of acting, both of which assume divers forms. In some it will be conscientiousness in maintaining the truth; in others a remarkable sincerity which shrinks from everything like dissimulation in any shape. But although truthfulness ever carries with it a certain power of attraction, it unfortunately too often loses much of its grace through the unamiableness of the qualities accompanying it; even as a precious gem fails to charm us while still encrusted with soil or other defilement.

Thus we not unfrequently act as though we thought the principle of strict adherence to truth set us quite free from all the claims of mutual charity; and hence the act of deferring in silence to the decision of another in some indifferent matter is a thing not to be thought of, if we have reason for believing that his decision is not in accordance with exact truth. Then, again, the sincerity of some persons renders them often brusque or chillingly cold, nay, perhaps offensively intolerant towards those whom they do not appreciate, or whose qualities are in strong opposition to their own, and they imagine such a line of conduct to be the only one consistent with truthfulness and sincerity; so great is their fear of seeming to entertain other sentiments than those which they do really feel. This spirit of unamiable sincerity affects the conduct of many even in religious matters, those for example who, afraid of being at all hypocritical or of appearing more pious than they really are, run into the opposite unreality of assuming a certain indifference, if not levity, regarding religious subjects, which is quite foreign to their true sentiments.

These and the like disadvantages, however, under which human infirmity places our practice of truthfulness, will appear all the clearer when brought into contrast with the practice of Him in Whom there was no shadow of error or sin. In ourselves, even without those formal unamiabilities, which frequently disfigure the beauty of sincerity in the soul, there must be an amount of human frailty and ignorance that, despite our best desires, renders us incapable of always judging and acting as we ought. Far otherwise was it with our Lord. In the Divine Nature, the attributes of God are so linked together that each one penetrates the other, because each one is in God; and God, as has been said, is in each attribute, and God is indivisible. Thus charity is truth, and truth is justice, and so on with the rest. The same is, in one sense, true of God Incarnate. Although the attributes of His Human Nature were created, finite, and in their manifestation really distinct, yet an act of compassion on His part was as much an act of truth as was any one of His severe condemnations of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and what in men might spring from natural inclination or mere human judgment, or possibly from caprice, sprang in our Lord from the Divine principle which governed Him in all things. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally."¹

It is a well-known axiom that humility is the offspring of truth, and this we see exemplified in all its perfection, first in God Incarnate, then in the ever-Immaculate Virgin, and afterwards in all the Saints. Thus when our Divine Lord claims belief from the Jews in the doctrines He sets before them, it is not

¹ Coloss. ii. 9.

His own glory as Man that He is seeking. Being the Eternal Truth, He could not teach otherwise, nor preach any other doctrine than the everlasting Truth, upon the acceptance of which the salvation of those who heard Him depended. For this He came into the world to give testimony to the Truth, but that He might draw and impel them to accept His words, for the saving of their souls, He continually refers to the source whence He derives them: "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father Who sent Me. He gave Me commandment what I should say and what I should speak."¹

One other instance in connection with our subject may be adduced from Christ's own words. He told the Jews that His judgment was just, and gave as the reason, because "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me." What else could He say consistently with truth and with the honour due to His Father Who had sent Him and Who still dwelt in Him? He even declares in the most emphatic terms the necessity of maintaining what He has asserted, "If I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar."² As He hears, so He judges. Our Lord thus vindicates the truth of His judgments, not only of the final judgment wherein the Father will make manifest the glorification of His Son in His Human Nature, but also in every judgment pronounced by Him on earth, and in insisting on this His leading desire was to secure the glorification of His Father. Who then does not see that humility is the offspring of truth and can never be allied with falsehood!

It was only when, as our Lord knew full well, "the father of lies" sought to seduce the High Priests and

¹ St. John xii. 49.

² St. John viii. 55.

rulers to their own destruction that He, the living Truth, spoke so severely, because light can have no fellowship with darkness. In like manner it was the humility of truth that made the ever-Blessed Virgin exclaim: "All generations shall call me blessed," prophetic words which were not only to be fulfilled age after age, but which also bore testimony to the truth of God's Word and to the Divinity of Him Who had taken Human Nature in the Virgin's womb.

So was it with the Saints, whose humility was true, and therefore did not permit them to disown the gifts of God in their regard, although it made them shrink from publishing them. We read in the Life of St. Teresa that nothing cost her so much as to be obliged to discover to her directors the graces and favours which God had bestowed upon her, and that she surmounted her repugnance only by reflecting how in any case He would be glorified by the manifestation of them. Either those to whom she revealed them would praise God for them, or by disbelieving them would make them turn to her humiliation. St. John of the Cross again, another ardent lover of God's glory, in his desire to promote the same by his own abasement exclaims: "He who truly loves God is not ashamed before men of what he does for God, and he hides it not with confusion, although even the entire world should condemn him."¹

In souls such as these the Spirit of Truth was poured out abundantly, conforming them to the likeness of Jesus, in Whom He resided in all His plenitude. Our Lord's words to the High Priest were: "I have spoken openly to the world, I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple,

¹ Maxim 102, on Divine Love.

whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them who have heard what I have spoken to them.”¹ We know what this open declaration, so strictly in accordance with the whole of our Lord’s manner of acting, cost Him. “And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest Thou the High Priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?”² In like manner, as has been said, whatever our Lord wrought, He wrought in truth. As He could not be deceived, so neither could He act according to any other principle than the truth that was in Him, or rather which He Himself was. His miracles were testimonies to His truth, as were also His works of mercy, of patience, of condescension and the like, although they were in many instances brought forward by the Jews as witnesses against Him. So blinded were they by jealousy that they could not discern in Him, or in the acts which they condemned, the very marks of that Messiah Whom their Prophets had foretold.

His Divine patience in their own regard became a stumbling-block to them through their forgetfulness that their Scriptures spoke of God, and consequently of Him Whom God should send to be their Saviour, as one “overlooking the sins of men for their repentance, and sparing all.”³ When our Lord acted upon this Divine principle He acted in accordance with the truth of His mercy, justice, wisdom, and every other perfection, but we cannot doubt that in

¹ St. John xviii. 20, 21.

² St. John xviii. 22, 23.

³ Wisdom xi. 24.

the weakness of human judgment, especially that of men prejudiced against Him through jealousy, as the Jews were, He frequently seemed to err both in His judgments and in His manner of executing them. Such was the opinion formed by the Pharisee in the case of Mary Magdalen, both when she, though known in the city as a sinner, came into his house and threw herself at our Lord's feet, being permitted by Jesus to kiss them, so also afterwards when during the supper at Bethania she anointed our Lord's Head with precious ointment. The permission our Lord gave her on these occasions was certainly not credited to the knowledge of the truth which He possessed, for the acts of anointing, so warmly defended by Him, were regarded by more than one, even of the disciples, as acts involving either ignorance or wastefulness.

This spirit of truth which imparts freedom to our actions, strengthens us also to encounter the adverse judgments of men. Our Lord being Truth itself could afford, if we may so speak, to exercise all His other perfections in accordance with this principle, and although, as will be seen later, He was governed in His every action by the Divine gifts of counsel and wisdom, and was thus guided by Divine motives even in His human actions, yet the Eternal Truth never was, never could be, compromised for a single instant by whatsoever He said or did. "I have spoken of Thy testimonies before kings, and was not confounded," are the words of David, who prefigured our Lord. Again, "Princes sat and spoke against me, but Thy servant was employed in Thy justifications."¹ The Royal Psalmist was assured of the truth which God had imparted to him, seeing that he had spoken and acted

¹ Psalm cxviii. 46, 23.

through the Holy Spirit. Therefore he was not put to shame by the judgments of men, nor heedful of their consequences. This is what we see in all its perfection in Jesus Christ: "Yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever,"¹ although in so many cases men failed to discover any evidence of Divine truth in His works and words, any more than they did in His observance of silence.

And as it was with her Divine Head, so it is now with His Church. Bearing on her brow the marks of her Divine origin stamped, like everything that emanates from her, with the seal of that truth whereof she is the sole authorized depositary upon earth, men remain blind in her regard and fail to recognize in her voice the living Truth, and in her judgments the echo of the Eternal Decrees and the revelation of the Eternal Will.

Before concluding this chapter, it only remains to draw attention to the manner in which our Lord maintained the truth of His doctrine, in relation not merely to those who were opposed to Him, but to those also who had begun to follow Him, and more especially to His own Apostles.

There ever recurs the same unswerving, unhesitating declaration of the truth which He came to teach, the same adherence to the principles of perfection which He laid down for them. It could not have been otherwise with Him. And dearly indeed it must have cost His affectionate Heart to observe that in the case of some this strict adherence to truth led to their going back and walking no more with Him.² Knowing within Himself how greatly some murmured at His doctrine, He asked them: "Doth this scandalize you?"

¹ Hebrews xiii. 8.

² St. John vi. 67.

and then warned them that their faith was about to be tried by yet more severe tests if they would become His disciples indeed. There is no softening down of the doctrine which they had found too hard to hear. If they were determined to go back because of the hardness of the truth, they must; but the truth itself could not admit of being gainsaid. Nor was there any exception made in behalf of the Twelve! Seeing many of His disciples leaving Him, He turns to the chosen Apostles of His Heart, and gives them also their choice: "Will you also go away?" We know how He loved them, and yet He will not recall one word which He has spoken, in order to retain them in His company. If they, too, despite their grand apostolic graces, cannot bear the whole truth, they must go. So again in the instance of the young man who offered to follow Him, and yet on hearing the conditions laid down by our Lord, "went away sorrowful." St. Mark describes in a few most touching words the affection our Lord bore him, but still at the moment of his departure we are not told by any Evangelist that even the most gentle argument was used to prevent his going. On the contrary, our Lord immediately turned to His faithful disciples and began to discourse of the difficulty of salvation for those whose hearts are attached to riches.

Now there are truths necessary to salvation, and there are truths necessary to evangelical perfection, the latter of course including the former, or rather being the very same truths in a higher degree of development. Our Lord had to maintain both degrees, so to speak, according to the calling of the persons whom He addressed, nor could He modify the truth in regard to either of these degrees. Thus, he who

had received the vocation to evangelical poverty must, in virtue of his calling, accept the fact that he was bound to sell all and to follow our Lord in absolute dependence and self-denial. Failing to do this, there was but one alternative, the sad one of abandoning our Lord. But yet let us not for a moment imagine that the truth was maintained by our Lord, as we too often see it urged by men, harshly and in the spirit of domineering. He preached things hard indeed for flesh and blood, yet tempered with that sweetness which was peculiarly His own : *O quam suavis est, Domine, Spiritus tuus*.¹ The reason why this truth was rejected lay in the hardness of men's hearts preventing faith from entering in, as our Lord Himself declared ; or in some instances there was that absence of the gift of piety which hindered their appreciation of the beauty of the truth set before them. There is some justice in the assertion that too frequently amongst men truth is presented before the mind in so unlovely a garb as to be an actual obstacle to its acceptance ; in contrast to this the beauty of Divine truth is placed far above the reach of man's disfigurement. Moral truths especially of which we now speak, such as piety and obedience, are often rendered distasteful, not only by the manner in which they are thrust upon us, but also by the alloy of selfishness or personal feeling, and the like, by which they are tarnished.

It was the evident absence of all this in our Blessed Lord that rendered inexcusable the conduct of those who rejected Him, inasmuch as His whole bearing was so strong a testimony of His Divinity. None but persons wilfully blind could have failed to see that in every word He uttered, and every work He performed, He

¹ Ant. ad Mag. I. Vesp. in Festo SS. Corpus Christi.

sought simply the glory of God and the salvation of souls through that truth which should make them free: "If you continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."¹

It is only where there is consciousness of the full possession of the whole truth, that it is maintained with sweetness as well as force, and this characteristic, this singular beauty of the truth "as it is in Jesus," shines forth in His spotless spouse the Holy Catholic Church. Against her He has promised the "gates of Hell shall not prevail." She alone can meet with calm dignity the assaults of calumny, century after century. She alone is capable of refuting those calumnies with the suavity becoming the pure, meek Bride of the Lamb; since in her alone the Spirit of Truth abides, implanted in her by the eternal wisdom of the Father, as her infallible guide, and secured to her through the shedding of Christ's most precious Blood.

¹ St. John viii. 31, 32.

CHAPTER IV.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS HUMILITY.

I am from above (St. John viii. 23).

IN taking on Himself our human nature, our Lord entered upon a two-fold mission, that of Redeemer and that of Teacher, and the race whom He came to redeem and teach had fallen from grace through pride. It was necessary, therefore, that the nature which had received so deadly a wound, should be made to see the beauty of that virtue by the loss of which it had brought perdition on itself. The fatal character of the wound consisted in this, that it was inflicted on the part of our nature in closest contact with God, namely, our reason; and it was by the Son of God taking to Himself a reasonable Soul, and showing forth therein the splendour of a human intellect when conformed to the Divine intelligence and Divine will, that the beauty of humility shone upon the world, and the gates of Heaven were opened.

The humility of our Lord is more constantly referred to and described than any other feature in His character, yet it fails perhaps to produce its due effect, through our forgetfulness of the Divine Nature of Him by Whom it was exercised with so marvellous a perfection. Let us consider for a moment the real nature of humility, before we proceed to study its beauty as manifested in

our Divine Lord; seeing that the word itself is frequently applied to certain external actions which, even when done in all sincerity, are but its outward title and expression. Humility, properly understood, is the virtue resulting from a full and complete recognition on the part of the creature of its position with respect to the Creator. Such a recognition will often lead the creature to seek voluntary suffering and self-abasement as the means best adapted for the attainment of this virtue.

Now, God in His Divine Essence could not thus abase Himself any more than He could suffer, but His only-begotten Son offered Himself to take human nature wherewith to clothe His Divine Person, that He might, through this means, find a way to make reparation by His humility for the pride of man. Jesus did truly thus abase or humble Himself, "He emptied Himself."¹ He did not cease to be God, but He hid all the splendours of the Godhead, so that they were in some sort eclipsed in Him, and He took the form of a servant, thus seeking by His self-abasement to repair the outraged majesty of His Father, and to show proud man the attitude due from him towards the God of Heaven and earth. In order to express the profound depths of His abasement, He had said by the mouth of the Royal Prophet: "I am a worm and no man."² Such is the language of one esteeming Himself as the lowest among the creatures of God, worthy only of being trodden under the feet of all.

Such considerations reveal to us the source whence came those words and deeds which shadowed forth the humility of Jesus. They make clear also the argument of the preceding chapter as to the affinity between

¹ Philipp. ii. 7.

² Psalm xxi. 7.

humility and truth, and will show us how ever present to our Lord's mind was the thought of His nothingness as Man and His dependence upon that Divine Person in Whom He had His being. Thus, when our Lord said that of Himself He could do nothing, and that the Father Who sent Him was with Him, and had not left Him alone, for He did always the things that pleased His Father, in these and the like truths He asserted His inability as Man to do anything independently of God. He glorified not Himself as Man, for He said His own glory as Man was nothing, but it dwelt in His Divine Personality.

When we recall what was shown in a previous chapter as to the knowledge of all things possessed by our Lord, and reflect moreover on the fulness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which rested on Him, we can better judge of the habitual attitude of the Soul of Jesus in presence of the majesty of God. He alone knew God in His Divine attributes. He alone knew the will of God in its perfection, and consequently He alone appreciated in its full truth the abyss of self-humiliation which was due to God from man. Herein we see divinely illustrated the truth of humility, even as we behold unveiled the falsehood of intellectual pride, and we are able to discern the intrinsic beauty of this virtue as it was in our Lord, before we proceed to consider its beauty in the results which it produced.

Many amongst us have perhaps read the Gospel narrative, time after time, without recognizing in innumerable instances the many evidences of our Lord's humility which it contains. They have marked it in His lowly birth and in the circumstances of His infancy. Who could fail to do so? They have detected the same with still greater ease in the ignominies heaped

on Him during His Passion. But on the countless occasions in His Public Life, when His fame was at its height, the humility of our Lord too often remains unnoticed by us. Now it is precisely during that period wherein multitudes followed Him and hung upon His words, wherein the fame of His miracles resounded throughout Judea and Galilee, that the splendour of His humility shone forth in all its loveliness, presenting a most perfect model for our imitation. According to the definition of humility given above, it may be said in one sense that only God Incarnate could be perfectly humble, since it is certain that He alone, being the Essential Truth, was able fully to appreciate the relationship between Creator and creature. The Incarnation was an act of supreme self-humiliation on the part of the Son of God, and His whole life on earth in His human flesh was one long series of humiliations, from and in accordance with the first step. This profound humility was the permanent disposition of His adorable Soul before His Eternal Father, in consequence of His full knowledge of what was due to that Father from a created being, and this interior act or disposition of humility was expressed before men in all the details of our Lord's life from the manger to the Cross.

It is from the lips of our Lord Himself that we are invited to learn of Him that humility and meekness of heart which is the property of such as duly recognize their lowly estate. "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."¹ He joins meekness to humility because it flows from it, as the stream does from its source. Our Lord recognized the justice of His Father's rigour in all that He required of Him, and therefore He

¹ St. Matt. xi. 29.

was meek when the effects of that rigour were pressing upon Him. He beheld in all creatures but so many instruments for giving effect to the just exactions of God, and hence the meekness of Jesus under calumny and persecution and cruelty. His rejection by the people of Bethlehem at His Birth, the resignation of His spirit during the Flight into Egypt from the cruelty of Herod, His passing by Jerusalem on His return for fear of Archelaus, His so meekly going home to Nazareth at the gentle reproach of His Blessed Mother, when she found Him in the midst of the Doctors: these may all be regarded as passive expressions of that meekness by which He would be characterized in all His relations with men, the one being a prelude indicative of what was to follow.

There are two branches of meekness, both springing from the same stem of humility: meekness, namely, towards God implying submission to His will, and meekness towards men manifesting itself by a submissiveness in their regard on every point that does not compromise the honour or glory of God. Both were admirably illustrated in the events of the life of our Divine Lord. The first three Evangelists narrate the coming of the Gerasens in large numbers beseeching our Lord to depart from their coasts, for they were filled with fear, partly no doubt at the sight of so great a marvel as the deliverance of the man possessed by a legion of devils, but in great measure also because of the destruction of the herd of swine into which our Lord had allowed the devils to enter, as would be reported by those who had charge of them. "And entering into a boat He passed over the water, and came into His own city."¹ Without a word of resent-

¹ St. Matt. ix. 1.

ment at the grossness of men who esteemed their earthly possessions more highly than the spiritual benefits offered to them, our Lord, seeing that they would not then at least receive Him, meekly complied with their request and passed over to "His own city." And what is the treatment which awaits Him there? It is an accusation of blasphemy on the part of the Scribes, when they heard Him assure the man sick of the palsy that his sins were forgiven him. Although the imputation was made only mentally, as we gather from the Gospels, yet their thoughts were read by Jesus and met with this most gentle reproach: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" After which He worked the cure in order that they might believe that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins. This done He quietly "passed on from thence."

Very similar are the circumstances occurring in the house of the Pharisee when our Lord absolved Magdalen in the presence of those assembled. "They that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" charging Him, as undoubtedly they meant, with assuming to Himself a power which He did not possess. Again, we read no word from Him in reply to the malicious judgment pronounced upon Him. He occupied Himself solely with strengthening in the newly-absolved penitent sentiments of confidence and a peaceful assurance of forgiveness.

Again, when He was about to raise the daughter of Jairus to life, and would console her friends who stood around weeping, He told them, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth, and they laughed Him to scorn."¹ Yet He meekly pursues His work of mercy, and when

¹ St. Mark v. 40.

the people are struck with wonder and admiration at its accomplishment, He charges them strictly that "no man should know it," and quietly retires from thence to Nazareth. Here a fresh occasion awaits Him of manifesting the meekness which so greatly characterized Him, and of instructing the disciples who followed Him by His own blessed example. He entered into the synagogue to teach, and many were impressed with His doctrine, whereat some, probably the rulers, began to cavil, asking, "Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?" Jesus, wishing to shame them into better faith, only remarked: "A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred." Could any words be meeker in answer to the objection which probably jealousy had in great part raised against Him? For this reason, we are told, "He could not do any mighty work there." Observe the expression, "could not"—was prevented.¹ This proves that it was not inability in Himself, but their want of faith in Him which prevented their being the recipients of His graces. He would not, however, depart from them without leaving behind Him some traces of His visit. He would not deprive the sick and poor of the charity He was ready to bestow, for their hearts had perhaps been softened by suffering, and they were disposed to believe in Him. Thus we read that He only "cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them," and then meekly went on his way to teach in the surrounding villages. By doing at least all that He could under the circumstances, He presents to every one, in every degree, an example of meekness but too little studied or imitated.

¹ St. Mark vi. 5.

Nay, He suffered yet more in "His own country" when on the occasion of another visit to Nazareth, during which He discoursed, under the figures of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian, of humility as a necessary disposition for duly receiving messengers sent from God. The people understood Him to refer to their own incredulity, and "rose up and thrust Him out of the city, bringing Him to the brow of the hill that they might cast Him down headlong."¹ Even then without any sign of anger, and without making a reply, He passed in meekness, yet in sorrow of Heart, "through the midst of them and went His way." After this He passed on to Capharnaum, and in the synagogue thrilled His hearers with the words of truth and grace that fell from His lips. There He wrought such mighty works that the "fame of Him was published in every place of the country;" while the concluding fourteen verses of the same chapter of St. Luke prove to us that this visit of our Lord to Capharnaum was a glorious triumph and manifestation of His Divine power. Not the less, on the morrow of that Sabbath, "rising very early," as St. Mark notes,² with the view of escaping observation, Jesus went forth into the desert, "and the multitudes sought Him and came unto Him, and they stayed Him that He should not depart from them."³ On their saying to Him, "All seek for Thee," our Lord replied: "Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also; for to this purpose am I come," and so He passed onward.⁴

Such is the tenour of all the Gospels. We find our Lord bearing wrong and outrage and contempt with

¹ St. Luke iv. 29.

² St. Mark i. 35.

³ St. Luke iv. 42.

⁴ St. Mark i. 37, 38.

that meekness which was one of the most striking proofs of His Divinity, and showing forth consistently on every occasion the humility that resulted from His appreciation of the attitude due from Him, as Man, towards God and of the meek submission He owed to His Father in every event that His will decreed or permitted. If we read with attention and careful thought the history of the three-and-thirty years recorded in the Gospels, we shall see our Lord passing onward with apparent design and haste from places and circumstances wherein He received admiration and His works were "blazed abroad," to seek neighbourhoods and positions in which He knew contempt and humiliation awaited Him. Such contempt and apparent failure were, in nearly every instance, aggravated by the presence of the disciples, requiring humanly speaking from our Lord the exercise of a more profound humility. We also find Him after some especial manifestation and acknowledgment of His power retiring again into solitude. Thus He fled into the mountain when, seeing the miracle of the loaves, they wished "to take Him by force and to make Him King;"¹ and, once more, upon the occasion of the miraculous feeding of the four thousand, He went up into a ship with His disciples alone.²

Such instances might be multiplied in the conduct of our Lord, but these we may find out for ourselves and study from the Gospel narrative. More especially in the account of the Sacred Passion, the humility and meekness of Jesus meet us at every step. Let us take, for example, the fulfilment of prophecy in the entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. "Behold thy King cometh to thee meek and sitting on an

¹ St. John vi. 15.

² St. Mark viii. 10.

ass," &c. We read the history again and again, and yet feel we have never fully realized the humility of that triumphal entry which could only have intensified the exultation of His enemies in the face of His approaching humiliation. Nor have we fathomed the meekness of His reply to the Pharisees, in their irritation at hearing the multitude of His disciples singing Hosanna to Him, and acknowledging Him as their King. "Master," they demanded, "rebuke Thy disciples;" but He only answered: "If these shall hold their peace, the very stones will cry out."¹

Other incidents connected with this solemn day shall be noted in their place, but two are worthy of mention at once, as being more particularly connected with our present subject. After our Lord's last warning to the Scribes and Pharisees, uttered in the hearing of all the people that all might be admonished what things they were to avoid, He testifies to the meekness of His Heart, in spite of all the scorn and contempt heaped upon Him, by that outburst of tenderness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." Even then He does not at once withdraw from the Temple, but sits down "over against the treasury" in order that, as we love to believe, His very last words may be those of commendation and blessing. He sees the poor widow casting in her mite, and calls the attention of His disciples to her act in the words related by two of the Evangelists.² Afterwards He arose, and in the meekness of His sorrow departed from the

¹ St. Luke xix. 40.

² St. Mark xii. 43; St. Luke xxi. 3, 4.

Temple for ever. What a subject for the study of a Christian artist! It scarcely yields in pathos to His passing forth from the Prætorium. He had done all He could. Neither words, nor deeds of love, nor had miracles been spared to gain them. He had waited for the softening of their stony hearts, hoping, as it were, against hope; but they remained hardened in their hatred of Him, and now it was only left for events to take their course. If men on their side refuse to be saved by Him, He still preserves the meekness of the Saviour's Heart, and goes forth finally from that Temple, where so long and so often He has tried to win them, without resentment or anger. Nay, within a few days, He will even plead with His Father in their behalf amidst the torments to which they will have consigned Him.

The second instance which offers itself equally to the study of loving contemplation and of Christian art is our Lord's act of returning to the Mount of Olives with four of His disciples, and His sitting down over against the Temple and delivering to them His solemn and vivid prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs which should precede the end of the world. It would seem as if He could scarcely separate Himself from the city and the Temple upon which He looked down so yearningly and compassionately, whilst He conversed with His disciples. Nor do we hear in His discourse one word of reproach or anger addressed to those who had rejected and scorned Him. His sole object is to warn His followers against impending dangers and to exhort them to watch and pray, and to practise good works in preparation for the coming of the Judge and for obtaining at His hands a favourable sentence.

To endure apparent failure with undisturbed humility of heart, and to bear scorn and contempt with perfect meekness, has the stamp of divinity about it, and in that fulness in which it was to be found in the Person of our Lord it was, as we have said, one of the most convincing testimonies to the truth of His Divine Nature. Ere yet our Lord had entered upon the events of His Passion He gave evidence of this most sublime humility. Who but the Saviour would have knelt and washed the feet of the man that had already sold Him into the hands of His enemies! The wondrous meekness of our Lord in that act may never indeed be known until all things are revealed, for our more perfect instruction in the mysteries and springs of action within the Sacred Heart. A few hours later, and we find Him receiving the traitor's kiss with a glance and word of such gentle expostulation and reproof as spoke the yearning love of His Heart for the faithless Apostle. His colloquy with the armed band which came out with clubs and swords to seize Him, His silence in the court of Caiphas regarding the false testimony that was brought against Him, His non-resistance when they smote His cheek and buffeted Him, and spat in His face, and blindfolding Him derisively bade Him tell who struck Him—all this, and far more of shame and insult than we shall ever learn on earth, show forth in truest character the meekness and humility which we find it so difficult to exercise, because we do not sufficiently study their exercise by Him in Whom their fullest beauty is exhibited.

St. Luke remarks with touching plaintiveness how “many other things they said against Him.”¹ Have

¹ St. Luke xxii. 65.

we ever dwelt upon all that those words convey, or tried to realize that we have one day infinitely more to learn regarding our Lord's meek support of injuries? We have, further, the picture of His humility before us when He was "set at nought" by Herod. The expression made use of by St. Luke in describing the contempt of the proud but petty King emphasizes the definition of humility given at the opening of this chapter. We began by showing how our Lord humbled Himself, to take our human nature. His whole subsequent life was, as we have seen, consistent with that first act of self-humiliation, and when He was "set at nought," as on the present occasion, He regarded that ignominy as due to Him in the low estate He had assumed, and therefore meekly accepted it all. The whole of the circumstances which followed are but a continuation of the same story, the climax being reached when they taunted our Lord with inability to descend from the Cross, and bowed the knee before Him in mockery of His kingship. In following our Lord from Bethlehem to Calvary there is not one period of His blessed life wherein His humility and meekness are not put to the severest test, nor is there a single instance in which He does not illustrate by His example what He taught by His word when He said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of Heart."

Another characteristic of true humility which is an integral part of its beauty, and which we see manifested in all its perfection in our Lord, and to some extent in all such as are conformed to Him, is the absence of self-consciousness. As pride is the perversion of truth, so humility is its essence. Hence He, Whose Soul was irradiated with the brightness of Eternal Light and on Whom the Spirit of the Lord rested in

all His fulness, recognized the infinite majesty of God, and as Man abased Himself proportionably before Him. From thence it resulted that the honour and glory of God being the end of every work and word of Jesus, He spoke and acted out of the abundance of His Heart, in view of that one supreme end. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."¹ His humility as Man caused Him to keep His Soul's eye fixed on the splendour and majesty of the God-head, in Whom and for Whom alone He wrought all that He did on earth.

A similar grace residing, though in a comparative degree only, in the Saints by reason of their likeness to Jesus, forms the source of that self-oblivion which becomes, as they advance in sanctity, the permanent disposition of their souls, and characterizes all their actions. This it is which renders them calm under humiliations, which enables them to bear patiently contradictions and misjudgments, which leads them to undertake great things for God without solicitude as to the possible issue in the disapprobation and ridicule of others. Whatever conduces to their abjection has a charm for them, since thereby they will attain the one great aim of their lives—the glorification of God. "He must increase, but I must decrease."²

We learn from the Gospel narrative that our Lord, in nearly all the cures He wrought, attributed them to the faith of the person who came to Him. No sooner is the favour conferred than Jesus shows a desire, we had almost said an anxiety, to avert all thought of self and leave the recipients of His benefits to give glory to God the Father. Again, we frequently hear Him enjoining those whom He has cured to "tell the

¹ St. Matt. xii. 34.

² St. John iii. 30.

event to no man;" and although for both these modes of acting Jesus had another motive, to be elsewhere spoken of, yet we possess in each a beautiful illustration of the humility of our Lord, that true humility which has but God's glory in view in everything it does, and seeks no honour for itself.

We observe also, once more, how strictly humility is allied with truth. Our Lord does not disclaim His power. He simply is silent regarding it, except in the case of the cure of the paralytic, when He speaks of it obviously in order to prove to the Pharisees that He read their thoughts accusing Him of blasphemy because He assumed to Himself the power and authority of forgiving sins.¹ Moreover, it was no less true that faith was indeed necessary on the part of the sick, before they could obtain the exercise of our Lord's power in their favour; while the absence of faith was, as has been seen, the reason why He could work no more miracles at Nazareth. But Jesus, in the humility of His Heart, preferred to attribute His works of mercy to such dispositions as He found commendable in men, leaving it for the grace of God to enable them to pierce through the veils of His Humanity, and by recognizing the power of His Divinity to glorify the Father in Him.

Finally, it was by humility that our Lord "fulfilled all justice," as we may gather from His own words to St. John the Baptist when the latter hesitated to baptize his Master. "Suffer it to be so now," said our Lord, "for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." And it was immediately after this supreme act of humility on the part of Jesus that the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him as a dove,

¹ St. Matt. ix. 3—6.

and the voice of the Eternal Father was heard proclaiming: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased."¹

CHAPTER V.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS POWER.

Who is this Beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength ? (Isaias lxiii. 1).

WHEN our Lord made His entrance into this world His Birth was heralded by angels, and in that same night the shepherds as first-fruits of His own nation acknowledged the power of the Babe of Bethlehem, and returned glorifying and praising God. Soon after, kings and sages were attracted by a mysterious influence to leave their far-off country and seek Him towards Whom they were impelled, and on finding Him to own Him, though poor and shivering in a manger, for their King and their God. A little while, and we find King Herod trembling with fear at the news that a Child has been born—the King of the Jews; and the whole of the city of Jerusalem is troubled with him. A few years pass along and the Child is seated in the midst of the Doctors, and not by His words alone, but by a secret power which went forth from Him, He fills the breasts of His hearers with mingled wonder and admiration. Thus it was that the power of Jesus, on His first entrance into the world, gave indication of its greater manifestation hereafter; as the sun in its gorgeous rising gives promise of the strength and brilliance it shall attain in its meridian.

¹ St. Matt. iii. 16—17.

Now the power which our Lord convinced men He really possessed, whether He manifested it openly by marvellous works, or whether He exercised it secretly in the depth of their souls, proved its Divine origin, inasmuch as it was unattended and, so to speak, unrecommended to the eyes of men by any claim to human greatness. He might have come upon the earth with visible manifestations of power, and have established His empire by force of arms and domination over every power that opposed Him. But instead of this, our Lord without riches, without exterior greatness, without even displaying the interior splendour of His Soul, causes His enemies to tremble, and reigns as Sovereign over all those in whom malice does not raise up a moral barrier to the exercise of His omnipotence. Thus does He both give proof of the Divine power residing within Him, and also testify to the truth of St. Paul's declaration that "power is made perfect in infirmity."¹

Power when unsupported by any visible force is always regarded with wonder, and when its exercise is purely reasonable, intelligent, and, above all, spiritual in character, it possesses an influence unknown to any power resulting from mere material force. We discover the like under its highest form in the rule sustained, with such gentle majesty, over the minds and hearts of millions by the Vicar of Jesus Christ. That rule is the reflection and, as it were, the perpetuation of the Divine power wielded by our Lord when He was on earth. Poor, like his Master, despoiled and persecuted like Him, nay in these latter days sharing with Him the imprisonment of His Passion, no monarch upon earth enjoys as he does the allegiance of the multitudes

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

who own him for their common head. The reason is that he not alone commands them as subjects, but that, through the power from on high with which he is endowed, he captivates their intelligence and their affections. More than this, as with our Lord, so with His Vicar, even those who affect to scorn his authority, those who ridicule him in his despoliation, as they ridiculed his Master in His ignominies and abjection, secretly marvel at the power which he still maintains in the world and over men, and half fear lest they too should be brought within its—to them—mysterious influence. Now if the power resulting simply from some invisible source, some origin not material, but altogether superhuman, possesses so great attraction, how much more influence must the power of our Lord Himself have possessed over those who were brought into immediate relationship with His Divine Person.

It was immediately after the wonderful cure of the man at the Pool of Probatica, that our Lord began to speak more plainly and definitely regarding the power by which He wrought the works that excited the admiration of some, the jealousy of others, and the astonishment of all. The Jews sought to kill Him, not only because He healed on the Sabbath-day, but because He called God His Father, making Himself equal to God. Then Jesus told them that "the Son cannot do anything of Himself but what He seeth the Father doing. . . . As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom He wills."¹ In these words, and in many others of a like character spoken by our Lord about this time, is contained the inner source of the deep theology of

¹ St. John v. 19—21.

the Church regarding His Divine Nature and Person. As time pressed He would fain force them to recognize, for their own sakes, that it was by His inherent power, through His Sonship with the Father and consequent unity of operation, He performed the wonderful works which they had seen. After telling them that He and the Father are one, which led to a new attempt upon His life, He calmly persists in urging on them His unity of nature and action with the Father: "Many good works I have showed you from My Father—for which of those works do you stone Me?" and again, "Though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

Thus was our Lord occupied in impressing upon that proud people the truth that the power of which they were so jealous was Divine, and that the wonderful works He wrought were performed by the same principle as that which had called forth all things out of nothing, since by no other principle could He work; He and the Father being one in Essence.

Now that which it was necessary for the Jews to believe in order to their salvation, and which we do actually believe, must also be kept before our minds, if we would form a just idea of the beauty and attractiveness of the influence exercised by Jesus over men. The calm dignity wherewith He asserts His power to perform works which only God could perform, should have sufficed to convince them of the Divinity of Him Who spoke. Thus, when they heard Him affirm that "the Son giveth life to whom He will; that as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He hath given Him power to do judgment, . . . that as

He hears, so He judges.”¹ When, again, they listened to His thrilling declaration that the Father loved Him “because,” said He, “I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again,”² they were inexcusable in not believing those words of life and truth, after seeing performed by Him wonderful works which only God could execute. Even when on occasions such as these we read that they sought in their fury to seize upon Him, or took up stones to cast at Him, our Lord instead of exercising His Divine power, as once His disciples desired He should do, by commanding fire to descend from heaven on those who would not receive Him,³ simply passed through their midst and escaped out of their hands; for He willed not to use His power to the destruction of souls, but rather to their salvation.

There were indeed many amongst the Jews who believed in Him for the works’ sake, so that, as we read, a dissension arose amongst them, wherein some accused Him of having a devil, whilst their opponents quoted against them the miracle of the blind man restored to sight, and asked: “Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”⁴ They had seen Him proving Himself to be absolute master of life and death, they had witnessed the instantaneous cures of the blind, the paralytic, and the dumb; they had heard of the marvellous power He exerted over the elements, and had listened to Him while He forgave the sins of those whom they shrank from and despised. Lepers were cleansed, the sick healed by the touch of His garment,

¹ St. John v. 21, 26, 30.

³ St. Luke ix. 54—56.

² St. John x. 17, 18.

⁴ St. John x. 20.

thousands were fed with five small loaves, devils were cast forth and proclaimed Him aloud to be "Jesus, Son of the Most High God."¹ He had been heard to say that "whosoever should eat His Body and drink His Blood, He would raise him up in the last day."² Again, that He was Himself "the resurrection and the life," and that "whosoever believed in Him although he be dead should live."³ Which last words were followed by the stupendous miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, already four days entombed.

There were not wanting then formal declarations which none but the Eternal Truth could have ventured to make, and which were delivered with all the weight and majesty that none but a Divine Person could have possessed. Each of those declarations had been supported by works, such as of themselves bespoke the Divine power of Him Who wrought them; and over and above this, there was a secret influence exercised over the hearts of those who witnessed them, so that many believed in Him, and many feared.

It was the beauty of the power of God making itself felt amid the human infirmity by which it was encompassed. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy: "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty. With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign."⁴ St. Paul tells us, when exhorting his converts to be obedient to superiors, "there is no power but from God."⁵ Now He Who before all others possessed this power was the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Possessing it inherent in Himself, it was His part to show to all succeeding generations the manner in which it should be wielded for the salvation of souls. True,

¹ St. Mark v. 7.

² St. John vi. 55.

³ St. John xi. 25.

⁴ Psalm xlv. 4, 5.

⁵ Romans xiii. 1.

all those who should hereafter derive it from Him could not share in the power of performing miraculous works, but they would learn from Him how to use the power given them as His vicegerents, by moulding their own conduct in its exercise according to His Spirit. This is what we see in the Sovereign power of the Church and of its visible Head, Christ's Vicar upon earth—unflinching firmness in maintaining the cause of God and in condemning error, mingled with the tenderness and gentleness of a mother in dealing with the erring; although, were she to use her power in a different spirit from that of her Divine Founder, she might crush her children by the thunder of her anathemas.

Another and most striking evidence of our Lord's Divine power, one which exercised a wondrous effect upon those who were the objects of it, was His facility in reading the thoughts of men's hearts. Our Lord at times bestows this gift upon some of His creatures. It is to be numbered amongst the graces conferred in limited degrees upon such as God wills, not for their private and personal advantage, but for the benefit of those souls in whose service they are to labour. Our Lord, as Divine Head of the whole Church, possessed every such grace and each one in all its plenitude. They, moreover, dwelt as permanent properties in His Soul without interruption or abatement, He could use them when and upon whom and in what manner or degree He willed. These prerogatives belong exclusively to our Lord, for to no man has it been given to unite in himself all ministerial grace, as was the case in the Person of Jesus Christ. Nor has one man ever possessed a single grace in all its perfection, but only a certain measure proportioned to the designs of God. In

no case have men held them by any lasting proprietorship, but only as transient privileges freely bestowed on them by God in the particular circumstances which rendered them needful for His glory and the good of souls. They have therefore not been at liberty to use them when or how they pleased, but only in dependence upon God's good pleasure, Who granted and withdrew them as He willed.

Having explained this difference, we can now better realize the perfections in the Soul of Jesus, which alone enjoyed these graces sovereignly for the work of redemption which He came on earth to accomplish. We have seen Him showing forth the power inherent in Him as God, and bestowed upon Him without measure as Man united to the Word, in the miracles He wrought, the marvellous cures He effected, and His other great and wonderful works. We can also see Him magnifying His Divine power, and leading captive the souls of men, by reading the secrets of all hearts. How frequently did He ask those who had hitherto given no utterance to their thoughts: "Why do you think these things in your hearts?"¹ It is noteworthy that, in nearly every instance of His thus addressing the Pharisees, the evil thoughts, afterwards too evident, had not found any verbal expression. This proves how distinctly He knew what was passing in their minds, while it afforded them another opportunity of recognizing His Divinity.

We have another and very striking manifestation of the influence He exercised over men in spite of themselves, in the incidents which took place when the Scribes and Pharisees led up to Him the woman taken in adultery. Those who brought her were jealous

¹ St. Mark ii. 8.

observers of the written law, or at least of its ceremonial, believing themselves strong in their imaginary or pretended sanctity. But they had to cope with the all-seeing scrutiny of God Himself, in Whose presence they stood. They came in their proud but petty strength, relying on their armour, but a stronger than they stood there, one Who would take away all their armour wherein they trusted, and overcome them. And how? They laid their accusation against the woman, and referred to the punishment commanded by Moses in the law for the crime she had committed, finally asking our Lord, with subtle intent to ensnare Him: "But what sayest Thou?"¹ Few, yet pregnant with significance, are the words in which our Lord framed His reply: "He that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her. . . . But they hearing this went out one by one, beginning at the eldest." Wonderful power of the Most High God veiled beneath human flesh! Had such a marvel ever before been heard of? They came proud in their conviction of placing Him in a difficulty by making Him appear either to transgress the law of Moses, or to belie the doctrine of mercy which He taught. The result fell upon them like a thunder-bolt. Were they converted? No one knows what passed within their hearts in that hour of humiliation, or if some amongst them at least were of the number of those who afterwards believed and confessed our Lord. Certain it was, they could not brook the piercing scrutiny of an eye which had read secrets unrevealed to man.

We have again the case of the Pharisee in whose house our Lord sat at meat when St. Mary Magdalen entered and cast herself at His feet, bathing them with

¹ St. John viii. 5-9.

her tears. Simon had but spoken "within himself," yet Jesus answered his thoughts with such convincing accuracy that the caviller could not fail to perceive his secret criticism had been detected.¹ Other Pharisees came to our Lord with subtle speech and skilfully prepared sentences, under the pretext of receiving from Him instruction, but in reality to "catch Him in His words."² They prelude their inquiry by flattering praises, as though to put Him off His guard. Our Lord, knowing their vileness, saith to them: "Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites?" Then with admirable prudence and wisdom He answers their proposition so effectually that "they wondered, and leaving Him went their way."³ The instances adduced are but a few among those of a similar character which might have been recorded, wherein the "Voice of the Lord in power" made itself felt within the hearts of men with a message either of salvation or of condemnation. How many or how few may have yielded to its influence we cannot know until the great day when all secrets shall be unfolded. One point, however, is certain, our Lord was no less beautiful and convincing in the manifestation of His power than in that of His other perfections. God is as beautiful in His power and justice as in His mercy and patience and every other attribute, and this is true also with regard to His Incarnate Son, seeing that He was the manifestation of the Father upon earth.

There are, however, other instances in which Christ proved the Divine power residing in Him, and these we should not wish to pass unnoticed. In the history of the conversion of the Samaritan woman we see most beautifully illustrated the influence which He exercised

¹ St. Luke vii. 39.

² St. Mark xii. 13.

³ St. Matt. xxii. 18—22.

over those with whom He came in contact. The first part of the narrative we may reserve to another chapter, the second part manifests to us the wonderful effect produced on the woman by the proof which our Lord gave that He could read what she had not divulged to Him. Upon her asking Him to give her the water of which He spoke, and which she understood only as mere material water, our Lord startles her by a reply which had no apparent relation to her request, but which drew from her an avowal that prepared the way for her conversion. "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband," is the immediate answer. To this our Lord replies by the unexpected announcement, not only that He knows this fact well, but that her whole past life lies bare before His eye. "Sir," she replies, acknowledging the mysterious truth forced upon her mind, "I perceive that Thou art a prophet." Then she enters into conversation with our Lord, really seeking under the appearance of argument to receive instruction from Him concerning the true Messias. In the end our Lord reveals Himself to her, she believes in Him, and becomes the medium of conversion to the city of Samaria. Her words regarding Him sufficiently indicate the power our Lord had gained over her by distinct reference to the sins which she had not revealed. "Come and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not He the Christ?" Nor was this influence exercised over the woman only, as we are subsequently told. "Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him for the word of the woman giving testimony. He told me all things whatsoever I have done."¹

If by this manifestation of His power to penetrate

¹ St. John iv. 1-39.

the secrets of all hearts our Lord gained such weight with sinners, and those with whom He was as yet a stranger, how great must have been its effect upon those who had become His followers, and were daily growing in faith and love. We read that the disciples came to Capharnaum, where it appears their Master was, and He being in the same house asked them: "What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest." By the question our Lord put to them they were made aware that He had read their thoughts and knew what had been discussed amongst them as they came along. His act and word immediately following served but to confirm their convictions. Taking a child He set him in their midst, as a model for their imitation, and calling the Twelve warned them: "If any man desire to be first he shall be last of all, and the minister of all."¹ Here indeed was an answer to the question they had proposed amongst themselves. Thus new chains were thrown around their hearts, binding them yet more strongly and closely to their Lord and Master. Surely a more intense love must have been developed in their souls, as with fuller confidence they abandoned themselves to the guidance of one Whose authority was exercised with such power and yet such sweetness.

That the possession of superior power draws us after it, is true even in the mere human relations of life. Superiority of intellect and of moral strength obtain a sway over the human mind and heart which material force never can attain; and, if we rise to the higher region of supernatural motives, we find

¹ St. Mark ix. 32, 33, 34.

the noblest intellects and strongest characters readily yielding themselves to an influence which they know to be from God. The world, indeed, laughs at such submission because it knows and understands nothing of the supernatural, but generations of saints and servants of God could explain this, and it will one day be made manifest how good and sweet it was to be subject to power "ordained of God."¹

Mounting yet higher, we shall learn that the love of God never increases so rapidly in the soul as when it is made to feel the effects of His resistless power. His hand is gentle, but terrible even in His love, and perhaps it is felt to be heaviest in the exercise of His greatest love. Herein it is that the Saints have been made perfect in afflictions of every kind, for when others, less dear to God and less united to Him, have prayed to be delivered from the weight of that pressure they, on the contrary, have kissed the hand that was apparently so cruel, and have loved to feel its weight, and have nestled more lovingly within His Bosom, and whilst they felt that He was indeed masterful and resistless in His guidance of them, the fire of their love grew all the stronger.

Other manifestations of our Lord's Divine power we need dwell upon but briefly, being such as are more generally noted and are more familiar even to casual readers of the sacred narrative. To the very end our Lord forbore from using His power otherwise than as Saviour, for in truth He yearned to carry conviction to His enemies by the manner in which He exercised that power. Thus we find Him healing instantaneously the ear of the High Priest's servant which Peter, moved by his loyal indignation in his

¹ Romans xiii. 1.

Master's cause, had cut off. Or again, what could be more sublime than the restraint placed on innate power, with which He met the armed band who came to seize Him in the Garden. He inquires with calm dignity whether they are come out as against a thief with swords and staves to seize Him, reminding them at the same time that He "sat daily with them in the Temple and they had not laid hands upon Him," being desirous of recalling to their minds what He had already explained, "No man taketh My life, but I lay it down of Myself;" and, as He has "power to lay it down," so likewise He has "power to take it up again." He would remind them also how often they had sought to take Him, but always He had passed through their midst and escaped out of their hands, and that if He is taken now, it is because He Himself willed it, and because it is "their hour and the power of darkness."¹ He tells Peter to put up his sword into its place, for he should have known that Jesus had but to ask His Father and He would "give Him immediately more than twelve legions of angels" to defend Him.² He asks the people whom they were seeking? For, as it would seem, He wished to compel them to pronounce the title so especially dear to Him, because regarded by them as an epithet of contempt. They reply to Him, "Jesus of Nazareth," and He tells them, "I am He." No sooner had these words instinct with a wonderful power been uttered, than the soldiers "went backward and fell to the ground."³

This was the last occasion of His displaying the Divine power in Him by external action, but it was very marked as occurring in the hour of His humiliation. It was the triumph of that Jesus of Nazareth

¹ St. Luke xxii. 53.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 53.

³ St. John xviii. 6.

Whom they despised, Who was about to allow the "hour of darkness" to snatch at its short-lived exultation. It was the foreshadowing of a terrible day in the future, when coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty that same Jesus of Nazareth shall be recognized, replying once more to the multitudes: "I am He;" the God Whom you despised and set at nought when on earth. But far more terrible shall be the effect of those words on that day than when they first gave evidence of His power at Gethsemane. He spoke afterwards to Pilate of His Kingdom, declaring that it was not of this world, that His power came from on high, and was not such as earthly kings acquire by force of arms. That power He refused to use for the gratification of Herod's vanity, but in His concluding words before Pilate He alluded to its Divine origin, when He warned him: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above."¹

Amidst the torments of the Cross, with His life's blood welling forth in streams, He stills cries out in the loud voice of power: "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Finally, when His Soul is on the point of leaving His blessed Body, that power again speaks forth with loud voice testifying, to the very last, that it remains undiminished and that in its full exercise He lays down His life. On a previous occasion they had asked of Him a sign by which they might recognize the authority through which He performed His works, and He had answered them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."² They at that time indeed scorned Him, misinterpreting His words as spoken of the Temple which,

¹ St. John xix. 11.

² St. John ii. 19.

according to them, had taken six-and-forty years in building ; but now were they about to discover the true fulfilment of His prophecy, when He Whom they saw expiring in torments should give full proof how, as by His own power, He had laid down His life, so by the same power He could break the bonds of death and rise triumphant from the tomb.

This is the “ Beautiful One walking in the greatness of His strength ” before men on earth, Who in the days of His humiliation and infirmity, “ looked about, and there was none to help,” Who “ sought and there was none to give aid.” His “ own arm hath saved for Him,” and His “ indignation itself hath helped Him.” “ So He became the Saviour of His people,” by the power of His beauty and the beauty of His power.¹

¹ *Isaias* lxiii. 1, 5, 8.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS WEAKNESS.

He shall grow up as a tender plant (Isaias liii. 2)

WE have looked on the beauty of the Divine power as it was manifested on earth in the Person of the Son of God, "compassed with infirmity." We will now direct our thoughts to the consideration of that infirmity itself as it appeared before the eyes of men.

We contemplate the crib of Bethlehem, and we gaze upon the crucifix, and from thence turn our eyes to the Tabernacle, and then the mystery of the weakness of the Incarnate God seems to penetrate us more and more with its marvellous depths and its gentle loveliness. When meditating on the subject of our Lord's weakness, we are apt to fall unconsciously into the serious error of imagining that this weakness was apparent only, and not real—an impression which strips the mystery of the Incarnation of much of its beauty, and renders our meditation upon it much less efficacious for ourselves. Now it must be remembered that our Lord in assuming human nature became subject to all the exigencies of the state which He had embraced. He might have entered into this world in the maturity of manhood, as was the privilege of the first Adam. But although He took the flesh of Adam in that condition of innocence which it had enjoyed

before the Fall, yet He took likewise upon Him all the infirmities of our fallen nature.

In our Blessed Lord we must distinguish His Divinity from His Soul and His Body. According to His Divinity, He was co-eternal with the Father, of one and the same Essence with Him, and was consequently like Him, "with Whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration."¹ His Soul indeed, from the first moment of its creation, to which He Himself with the Father and the Holy Ghost contributed, was perfect in every faculty and quality, endowed with a capacity for receiving all the treasures of grace infused into it by the Word to which it was united, as well as all the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and it was placed in the full enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. Whereas His Body was subjected to the laws of human nature, sharing in all the weakness which the condition embraced by Him demanded. For this end He held in check the omnipotence of His Divinity and the vastness of that power with which His adorable Soul was endued. As by miracle He thus restrained His power and especial gifts from their full exercise within His Sacred Body, the latter experienced the helplessness common to all the children of Adam on entering into this world. His was a voluntary suspension of power it is true, yet not the less real; hence it came that His Body was formed by degrees, and that His natural strength developed itself but slowly, as in other infants. In like manner He withheld the resources of His Divinity from affording any facility to His tongue in the formation of words, or to His limbs in the development of their strength and action, but left them in the natural weakness befitting the tender age of infancy.

¹ St James i. 17.

Generations of Saints have been formed by the contemplation of the mysteries of the Child-God—the Eternal present in the Babe Whose days might be counted—Omnipotence helpless and dependent on His creatures for movement—the eternally spoken Word incapable of speech. And whence have these Saints learned their wisdom? They have gazed on the beauty revealed to them in the Babe of Bethlehem. They have understood how God chose voluntarily, through love of them, a state of weakness and dependence. The beauty of that mystery has passed into their own souls, and made them in spirit little ones like Him, meek and humble and guileless, and willing captives of His will. But we must pass on to consider the voluntary weakness of our Blessed Lord at other periods of His life wherein, no less than in His Infancy, He manifests how thoroughly He bore in Himself the conditions of the nature He had assumed.

Let us recall what has been previously said in relation to our Lord's experimental knowledge. We have seen that no fresh experience, coming to Him through His exterior senses as His natural age advanced, added anything to the original gift of created and infused knowledge imparted to His Soul in fullest perfection from the first instant of its creation. But in proportion as day by day, and year by year, He made most real and sensible experience of the requirements, infirmities, and miseries of the state embraced by Him, His experimental knowledge continually augmented. His natural strength developed gradually with Him as in other human beings, and little by little He acquired the physical power needed for the labours demanded of Him according to His advancing years. What Mary and Joseph beheld with their eyes we believe by faith,

and surely our hearts must be inflamed with tender love while we believe in and adore the depths of the wisdom of God. Blessed indeed were the eyes of Mary and Joseph as they watched the gradual development of the natural capacities of Him in Whom resided all power, and daily witnessed the marvellous and abiding miracle whereby the Divine Omnipotence held Itself back from flooding the Humanity wherein It dwelt. Although she knew Him to be God, and recognized in Him that power which could at its will utter another *Fiat* calling forth into being millions of new worlds, we can imagine how Mary first tried the weight of the objects she put into her Child's hands, lest they should surpass His strength. Joseph too, whilst adoring Him as the First Cause and the Divine Architect of all things, Whose activity and Whose work never ceased, yet proportioned the exertions he required of Jesus to the natural growth of His human strength, and watched with tender solicitude lest the all-capable Creator should be fatigued. They bore Him in turns embraced within their arms during the Flight into Egypt, and made frequent halts on their return, lest the length of the journey and the aridity of the desert should exhaust the strength of Him Who out of His inexhaustible abundance was supplying to them the support needful for the heat and burden of the day. They provided the bread that was necessary for the sustenance of Him Who was Himself the Bread of life, and gave water for refreshment to Him Who had struck the rock in the wilderness, "and made streams run down as rivers,"¹ Who was Himself the Fountain of living water springing up into everlasting life. The love of Mary and Joseph continually increased as they

¹ Psalm lxxvii. 15, 18.

contemplated the voluntary but real dependence of Him Who was sovereignly independent, while the adoration they paid to that Eternal Wisdom which guided this dependence was intensified the more they studied the mystery of God's great love for man.

The elements, too, and all inanimate nature lent their assistance, and contributed to the necessities of the God Who had made them, and Who preserved to them their existence. The dawn of day brought its light to the eyes of Him Who was the Light of the world, and the genial rays of the sun and the pure air gave to Him the warmth and the exhilaration that were necessary for Him. Thus was God, in the weakness of His flesh, dependent on His creatures, and thus does He become more beautiful in our eyes and dearer to our hearts as we contemplate the mystery. Nor was it alone the weakness and dependence incident to the stage of childhood of which our Lord was pleased to make experience. The language of the Gospel narratives clearly informs us that throughout His life He submitted Himself to the common laws of the nature He had assumed. Thus we read that after our Lord had been displaying the plenitude of authority which acted as a magnet upon many, and a cause of wonder to all, yet drew down upon Him the envy and hatred of the Pharisees and chief priests, when they took up stones to cast at Him, "He hid Himself and went out of the Temple." He had declared solemnly and plainly: "Before Abraham was made, I am," but now He is obliged to hide Himself in order to effect His escape.¹ In the same Gospel we find Him teaching openly His union with the Father, and thereby so exasperating His hearers, that they sought

¹ St. John viii. 58, 59.

to take Him, but once more "He escaped out of their hands."¹ After the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, we hear that when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him King, "He fled again into the mountain Himself alone."² All these and similar expressions indicate the necessity, voluntary yet real, under which our Lord placed Himself of having recourse to ordinary means of defence against the malice of His enemies until the hour decreed from all eternity should have arrived, when He would suffer them to take Him and do with Him as they would. He had but to will, and in a moment His proud adversaries would have fallen cowering at His feet. If He had permitted them to attack Him, He might have rendered His triumph still more brilliant by an open display of the power inherent within Him. But He veiled the glory of His Divinity, and thus leaving His Humanity in the weakness natural to it, He was in truth compelled to have recourse to the ordinary means of safety.

It is worthy of note that the occasions on which our Lord held His miraculous power in abeyance were for the most part preceded by those in which that power had been manifested. It was as though He would give full proof of the royal freedom of His voluntary subjection to the conditions of His Humanity, and render it all the more striking by the previous manifestation of His Divine power. When the armed band came to seize Him in the Garden, we have seen Him exercise His Divine omnipotence in casting the whole multitude to the ground by the simple declaration that He was Jesus of Nazareth Whom they sought. Yet no sooner had He done this, than He returned to the

¹ St. John x. 39.² St. John vi. 15.

natural weakness of His Humanity, and gave Himself up to their power, suffering them to lead Him away and commence the long series of outrages which was to terminate in His death. Then was fulfilled the prophecy: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter."¹ Then the words came true: "I do not resist."² He voluntarily deprived His exterior faculties of the power of resisting, and made experimental acquaintance with that malignant spirit of His enemies which He had foreknown from the beginning through the Divine knowledge wherewith His Soul was endowed. Thus the cords with which they bound Him really restrained His sacred limbs, although He could have nerved them with a strength they did not in themselves possess, to break His bands asunder more easily than Samson did the cords of the Philistines. Again, when they blindfolded Him, His eyes were in truth deprived of the sight of the sensible objects before Him, although as God He beheld not these only, but the interior malice of their hearts, unrevealed to every eye save His.

But now let us contemplate Him in the closing scenes of His life, wherein the weakness we have spoken of wears its most touching aspect. Not to dwell upon His scourging, when bound naked to the pillar He refuses all assistance to His Sacred Humanity, by which He might have delivered Himself from the confusion and insult offered to His modesty in the holy sensitiveness of His purity, let us enter the way along which He carried His Cross, and follow step by step the Holy Victim on His last sad journey. Memories will crowd in upon us urging us to look upon this new Isaac bearing the wood for His Sacrifice. We shall

¹ Isaiah liii. 7.

² Isaiah I. 5.

think of the first great journey which He the Son of God made from the bosom of the Father to the lowly condition in which He appeared on earth. We shall recall the burden of the penalty of our sins which He so meekly bore for three-and-thirty years. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."¹ We shall remember the distance He has travelled, the fatigue and weariness He has endured in search of the sinful and the erring, and the tenderness with which He has lifted up and carried in His arms those who had fallen; and what is the return He meets with in the end? Mark Him faltering beneath the weight of the Cross, so disproportioned to the natural strength of His Body now weakened and exhausted by pain and fatigue and loss of blood. Three times, in the course of that pilgrimage of sorrow, His tottering steps gave way, and the regarding Angels beheld their God prostrate on the ground beneath the feet of men. His exhaustion and suffering left Him powerless to rise. No strong but gentle hand offered to lift up Him, Who had helped not only the fallen sinner to arise, but those also who were physically unable to help themselves. For Him there remains only cruel blows and rough unfeeling hands to drag Him on His feet again, as men haul at a beast of burden which has fallen beneath its load. Brutal as were the efforts made by them, they were necessary in order to enable Him to continue His journey to its conclusion. To have risen unaided in His state of utter prostration would have involved the working of a miracle, and the only miracle He chose to work was that of restraining His Divine power from imparting to His Humanity superabundant consolation and strength.

¹ *Isaias liii. 6.*

We are not told at what precise moment it was our Lord gave such signs of exhaustion as to impress His enemies with the fear they might be deprived of the savage satisfaction of witnessing His expiring torments on the Cross, and thus led them to force Simon of Cyrene for a while to carry the Cross. This event, however, is a fact in the history of the Passion, and reveals to us in clearest characters the reality and the full extent of the physical exhaustion to which our Lord was reduced. At length the hill of Calvary was reached, and Jesus with laboured breath and with great drops of sweat hanging on His brow and mingling with the blood that trickled from wounds caused by the thorns has mounted to the summit, the place for the high altar of His Sacrifice. Helpless once more, as in the crib of Bethlehem, He lies upon the Cross whereon, in the free exercise of their merciless will, His executioners have cast Him. And now He hangs suspended between heaven and earth in the iron grasp of the nails that fasten Him down on His bed of death. The Gospels tell us how the multitude with the chief priests and the scribes and the ancients tauntingly challenged our Lord to descend from the Cross if He were the Son of God, the King of Israel. But instead of using His Divine power to aid the weakness of His Human Nature, He remains as helplessly attached to His Cross as were the thieves on either side. He Himself reveals to us the extremity of abandonment to which His Humanity was reduced, in the cry which He utters to the Eternal Father. His suffering Body hangs there destitute of relief or support, in the same miraculous withholding of His Divine power and glory, until the very close. And thus He ended His earthly life in even greater helplessness and weakness than

when He began it, a Babe in swathing-bands, warmed by the breath of beasts of the field.

Beautiful indeed is Jesus in the manifestation of His power, but surely no less so in that of His weakness. His love is as truly manifested towards His Father and towards us, just as the goodness and beauty of God are equally shown in all His attributes. But when we regard the weakness of our Lord, His dependence upon His creatures, and His submission to the laws of human nature, we seem to enter into relations of more tender familiarity with Him, which without this dispensation of His love we never should have attained. Thus it is that, profoundly as we adore His beatific omniscience and revere His infused and acquired knowledge, that acquaintance with things which is called experimental becomes in Him from one point of view dearer to us than all the rest. The reason is that it enables us to feel how truly our Saviour is in all things made like unto His brethren; being Himself "also compassed with infirmity," and having "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."¹ It is beside our purpose to dwell longer at present on the various positions and circumstances in the consideration of which we might derive consolation from our Lord's weakness and dependence. It suffices to suggest a more frequent remembrance and a more assiduous meditation upon a subject that appears to us to be, practically at least, too much ignored.

It belongs however to our design to consider briefly in one like ourselves the attractiveness of this dependence incidental to our nature, when particular circumstances render it more prominent. Such comparison will reveal to us how touchingly beautiful the like

¹ Hebrews v. 2—8.

dependence was when manifested in the Incarnate Son of God. Let us imagine we see before us some friend whose personal qualifications entitle him especially to our love and veneration. He is suddenly struck down, whilst yet in the full vigour of his age and of his rare mental power and activity, by an infirmity which renders him absolutely dependent on those around him for even the most trivial services. We speak not at present of the physical suffering that might be involved in such an affliction—the pain and sickness and utter loss of health. We only think of the helplessness to which our friend is reduced, making him so strikingly like our Lord in the weakness of His flesh, and above all in the helplessness of His Passion. The main difference would be that in the former case the inability of action is compulsory, whilst in our Lord it was voluntary; although, for the reasons adduced, it was actual and real in its consequences. Now in the instance supposed, or perhaps known to some of us as a fact, should we not feel, in addition to our compassion, a certain attraction—a vague impression of unseen influence at work—an indefinable beauty hidden beneath the external helplessness and weakness of a man thus stricken down in the full strength of his age, and of his mature and ripe intellect. Assuredly this would be the feeling in a soul possessed of delicate instincts, and still more in one spiritually refined by habitual meditation on the mystery of weakness in the Incarnate Word and by the contemplation of His beauty therein made manifest.

What, again, marks the age of infancy as so peculiarly interesting, apart even from its innocence, if it be not its mute appeal to the tender instincts of our nature, claiming thereby our protection and assist-

ance. The two examples which we have given help especially to illustrate the weakness of our Lord in two different stages of His life. There are many other forms of dependence either in the ordinary course of man's experience, or in the exceptional one of accidental circumstances, which will possess a peculiar beauty for souls capable of discerning the beautiful wherever it exists, and will enable them to realize how replete with attractiveness must have been the dependence and the helplessness of Jesus in the weakness of His human flesh.

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS AUTHORITY.

He was teaching them as one having power (St. Matt. vii. 29).

It may probably strike some of our readers that the subject of our present chapter has already been treated of while we were considering the beauty of Jesus in the manifestation of His power. It must be granted that His authority and His power do not appear at first sight to demand separate treatment, inasmuch as being Divine they are inseparably united together. We shall soon see, however, that although one in essence they differ in the time and character of their manifestation before men. Our Lord's power would have remained ever equally great, equally efficacious in its results, had He received it without any external manifestation of authority. His Divine authority was inherent like His Divine power, and yet His will was free to exercise

these or not, according as He was led by the Holy Spirit.

His miracles were all the work of His Divinity, but He did not manifest His authority after the same manner in performing them. Thus when He cured the woman of an issue of blood, the miracle was wrought so secretly that on turning to inquire who had touched Him His disciples were astonished He should ask the question, because the crowd were thronging around and jostling against Him. Nor was it until the woman came and threw herself at His feet and "told Him the truth" in the hearing of the people, that He indicated by word the authority He had exercised; and even then He simply bade her go in peace, ascribing her cure as was His wont to her own faith.

Again, our Lord's authority would as truly and substantially have resided in Him even had He never revealed it by a single word or act, since He was one and the same Essence with the Father, and was charged from the beginning with the Divine commission to manifest Him to men. But the repeated external manifestations of His authority formed one of those cords of Adam by which He would captivate, for the sake of their salvation, the minds and hearts of men to whom He was sent.

In meditating on our Blessed Lord we are apt to confine ourselves to one aspect only of His beauty, with a result both pernicious to ourselves and wanting in respect to Him, because while it narrows our appreciation of all that He really was, it also tends to set limits to our love. This places us in danger of forming fanciful views respecting our Lord, and so of imparting to our devotion a sentimental cast, which renders it weak, inefficacious, and egotistical. It is to

counteract this evil that the perfections of our Lord are in the present volume regarded from various points; so that we may view His beauty under a variety of different aspects. Even at the risk of apparent repetition, it is better to avoid all chance of losing a single trait of that divinely human loveliness which a more careful method may disclose to us.

In the present chapter, therefore, we contemplate the beauty of our Lord in the exercise of His authority. The dignity of manner which gave weight to His every word, which marked each with a character of its own, and invested His actions as with a royal robe—this deeply impressed all who approached Him, and, as we gather from the Gospel narratives, attracted multitudes by its marvellous charm. No more striking proof have we of the presence and work of the Holy Ghost in the adorable Soul of Jesus than the manner in which He exercised His authority. In the Epistle to the Romans we read: "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God."¹ Now the first-born among the sons of God was our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was led by the Spirit in every action of His life. Whether He spoke or whether He was silent, whether He confronted His enemies with stern rebuke or delivered Himself out of their hands, in fact, in whatever He did He strictly followed the guidance of the Spirit dwelling with Him in all its plenitude. "Wisdom had built herself a house" in the Soul of the Incarnate Son, and He drew from thence the Divine counsels according to which we behold Him now speaking with authority, now observing silence—at one time bearing Himself with all the majesty of the Divine Person, at another possessing

¹ Romans viii. 14.

Himself in meekness, and suffering men to have their way. A due appreciation of the attractive influence of the authority whereby our Lord spoke and taught cannot be formed by a simple perusal of the Gospel history. The quiet and loving contemplation of prayer is necessary, apart from reasoning or the endeavour to form thoughts of our own regarding it.

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount we learn that "the people were in admiration at His doctrine;" for "He was teaching them as one having power, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees."¹ When describing how our Lord taught in the synagogue at Capharnaum on the Sabbath-day, St. Mark uses a similar expression: "And they were astonished at His doctrine. For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes."² St. Luke gives testimony to the same in the fourth chapter of his Gospel, having previously detailed the circumstances of Christ's preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth. We are told of the calm dignity with which He rose up to read, and unfolding the book found the prophecy of Isaias concerning Himself.³ Then restoring the book to the minister He sat down, "and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him." We may imagine with what majesty of action He rose and took the scroll, and folding it again gave it back and then resumed His seat. A new and solemnizing spirit doubtless breathed forth in the very tones of His voice, as He gave utterance to a prophecy often before heard by those present, but falling upon their ears now as a fresh inspiration from the lips of the Son of Joseph. Then He tells them that this day the Scripture they had heard Him read is fulfilled. "And they wondered

¹ St. Matt. vii. 28, 29.

² St. Mark i. 22.

³ Isaias lxi. 1.

at the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth. And all gave testimony to Him." We gather from the words we have quoted out of the Sacred Text that the people were amazed at the difference between the teaching of our Lord and that of the Scribes and Doctors of the Law. Nor was it simply in His doctrine that they felt such a power of attraction, but in the sovereign authority with which He delivered it, as suggested to us by the words of St. Mark: "For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes." The latter spoke but as expositors of the Law, and frequently gave greater heed to external ceremonies than to the essential precepts of the Law. Our Lord, on the other hand, spoke as the Lawgiver, with a weight of authority none could assume, and with a secret influence penetrating all hearts. They found His doctrine admirable, His authoritative delivery irresistible, though the pride and hardness of their hearts formed an obstacle that prevented many from profiting by it. Even the Scribes and Doctors of the Law were impressed with the truth of His words through the force of His manner of address, so that in disputing with Him they knew not what to answer, although envy and jealousy so far tyrannized over their minds and blinded their eyes that in the hardness of their hearts they could not bring themselves to yield to their convictions.

So profound was the impression caused by the Sermon on the Mount that, as St. Matthew tells us, when our Lord came down from the mountain great multitudes followed Him, and a poor leper, who doubtless had heard of His fame and the marvellous effect of His words, came to adore Him, saying: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." Thus

did he testify readily both by his action and his words to the faith implanted in his heart through the exercise of the Divine authority of our Lord and the impressive dignity of His Person. Having healed the leper, our Lord passed on and entered Capharnaum, where He was met by the centurion, who besought Him on behalf of his servant lying grievously sick with the palsy. Our Lord at once promised to go and heal him, but the centurion, pained at the condescension of one Who had deeply impressed him by His preaching and wonder-working power, owns himself to be unworthy that our Lord should enter under his roof, but that if Jesus will only say the word his servant will be healed. Then follow those remarkable words which, under the form of pleading, convey so delicate and appropriate an acknowledgment of his faith and ready submission to our Lord's authority. "For I also am a man subject to authority," he exclaims, "having under me soldiers, and I say to this, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." At these words, so pregnant with spiritual discernment, Jesus Himself marvelled, declaring that He "had not found so great faith in Israel." We know their meaning to have been that, if he who spoke them had but to command those over whom he held authority in order to secure immediate obedience, how much more was this the case with Jesus, of Whose sovereign authority he had formed so high and just a conception. We have made selection of these instances because they represent the marvellous effect produced upon the people by the authoritative teaching of our Lord, although the fame of the miracles He had already wrought may claim some share in eliciting faith and profound veneration, without how-

ever its attaining to the height of that full belief which we have seen in the leper and centurion.

While we consider the beauty shining through our Lord's exercise of His authority, two points will greatly heighten our appreciation of it. One is the fact of His being known to the people—personally in a great part of Galilee, and by report throughout Judea—as the Son of a poor artisan who had never studied the Law or acquired any human learning. “How doth this Man know letters, having never learned?”¹ And here also we observe the utter discrepancy marking our Lord's declarations as to the nature of His Kingdom, His power, and the authority with which He taught, when contrasted with the actual condition in which He appeared amongst men. None but a Divine leader could have ventured upon such an apparent contradiction, no one save He Whose doctrine was indeed not His—in the sense in which the Jews took it to be—but most truly and inevitably His, for the reason that He was one with the Father Who had sent Him. The second point to be remembered is the meekness and humility of the Heart of Jesus, together with the sweetness of His character and of His Spirit, that, like “oil poured out,” ever inclined Him to heal the wounds of the heart and soothe the irritated mind. In this we note how His authoritative and dignified manner of teaching, of confuting error, and of justifying His doctrine and actions generally was the natural outcome, so to speak, of His Hypostatic Union with the Word. How could God speak and act otherwise than with the authority and majesty of the Divinity? It was this great truth that the people discerned as explaining the difference between Christ and the

¹ St. John vii. 15.

Scribes and Pharisees, for the latter spoke and taught only as men—men swayed by the influence of base passions, filled with jealousy and fear lest their power and authority should be wrested from them by one Whom they felt intuitively to be superior to themselves.

Scarcely a single instance occurs in the Gospels wherein we do not find indications of the same calm and dignified exercise of authority with which He always acted. Thus we read in St. Matthew, that having "cast out the evil spirits with His word," from many who were possessed, "seeing great multitudes about Him, He gave orders to pass over the water to the other side." It was on this occasion that a certain Scribe was so impressed by the calm dignity of our Lord's manner that he desired to attach himself to His service, exclaiming: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go."¹ In the next chapter, wherein the cure of the man sick of the palsy is narrated, we have an example not only of our Lord's Divine power, but also of the dignity of His words in His answer to a charge of blasphemy brought against Him, and in the authority with which He required the man to take up his bed and walk to his home. We read afterwards of Matthew rising up at the call of our Lord and following Him, and how, during the banquet to which the Apostle invited his fellow-publicans, Jesus sat at table and ate with them. The Pharisees cunningly addressed their criticism and condemnation not to our Lord Himself, but to His disciples: "Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" Our Lord heard the words of cavil, and with calm dignity answered for His disciples, "They

¹ St. Matt. viii. 16, 18, 19.

that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill," thus tacitly proclaiming Himself the physician of souls. Then He bade them go and learn the meaning of the Prophet Osee, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," adding, "for I am not come to call the just, but sinners," in which words He really discloses to them that He is come to fulfil that prophecy in His own Person by His merciful dealings with sinners.

One Sabbath-day, as our Lord passed through the cornfields, His disciples being hungry plucked the ears and ate, rubbing them in their hands. At another time some of the Pharisees addressed themselves to the disciples, asking them: "Why do you that which is not lawful on the Sabbath-day?" Jesus, as before, Himself defends them, and overwhelms the pride of the cavillers with humiliation. He refers them to their own sacred history, of which their ignorance was singularly inexcusable in men who were so pretentious. "Have you not read so much as this, what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him?" And after enlightening them, our Lord adds this striking declaration, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." It seemed as if He designedly exhibits His authority as to the sabbatical law, in order to prove to them His assertion, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." He entered into the Synagogue of Capharnaum on a similar day, well knowing that His enemies watched, for the purpose of bringing an accusation against Him. Seeing a man there whose hand was withered, and reading the thoughts of the Pharisees, our Lord commanded him: "Arise, and stand forth in the midst." Obedient to one who thus called upon him, as having authority, the man stood forth. Upon this our Lord addressed

Himself to the priests and the scribes: "I ask you if it be lawful on the Sabbath-day to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" Then "looking round about on them all, He said to the man: Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored." This act of sovereign authority, by which our Lord not only manifested His power of working miracles, but also openly declared Himself the institutor of a new dispensation, without heeding the opinion of the priests and rulers of the synagogue, so excited them that we are told they were filled with the madness of envy and jealousy, and "talked one to another what they might do to Jesus."¹ That which maddened them must surely have filled with joy and admiration the hearts of all those who loved our Lord, as they contemplated the beauty of His gentle dignity in the solemn utterance of His Divine teaching. At a later period in our Lord's Ministry, when healing the man sick of the dropsy, the same question arose: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" The lawyers remained silent, and Jesus taking the man, healed him and sent him away, and then He Himself answered the question He had asked: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath-day? And they could not answer Him to these things." The incident had occurred in the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees, and our Lord took occasion from the presence of many guests who sat at table to deliver a long and beautiful instruction, with so great impressiveness that, after He had left the house, "there went a great multitude with Him."²

Before passing on to other occasions wherein our

¹ St. Luke vi. 10 11

² St. Luke xiv. 6, 25.

Lord drew to Him the hearts of many, and the hatred only of the malicious, one other event remains for mention. This was the cure of the woman bowed down with infirmity for eighteen years, and it too was wrought in the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, whilst He was passing through Judea. Our Lord in His Divine wisdom refuted the usual objection: "Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you on the Sabbath-day loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water—if it be so, how much more should not this woman be loosed from her infirmity on the Sabbath? . . . And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the things that were gloriously done by Him."¹ What power of attraction must there not have been in the majesty with which our Lord exercised an authority which could produce such results. That Christ should have won the confidence of the people is not so remarkable, but that He should have again and again addressed such language as the above to the chief priests and rulers of the synagogues, or have acted in their presence with such magisterial superiority; and that, instead of being seized as an impostor and a madman, according to their secret wish, He should have awed them into silence, and covered them with shame, all this affords superabundant testimony to the influence exercised by the Divine authority of our Lord, even over those who obstinately hardened themselves against its attractive sweetness.

The like wonder is perpetuated in His Church, and as the Scribes and Pharisees could not imitate the Divine authority with which our Lord taught and acted, so neither can any sect or community calling itself a

¹ St. Luke xiii. 15, 17.

Church assume the voice of power, and command the obedience of men; for this is the prerogative of the one unspotted Spouse of Jesus Christ, in which alone His Spirit abides. As it was with her Divine Head, so it is still. Cavillers there are in abundance who criticize now her mercifulness, which along with the Pharisees they regarded as laxity, comprehending neither the Divine Wisdom nor the Spirit of her Founder; and now again her strictness, which those who are in love with this world esteem too hard for flesh and blood. They forget that she is the living exponent of Him Who taught: "Unless a man deny himself he cannot be My disciple," and Whose life supplied the true commentary to His words. Thus it is that the Church and her visible Head, Christ's Vicar upon earth, are signs to be contradicted, and will continue to be so to the end. But the authority possessed only by one divinely sent holds special weight with all in whom the spirit of prejudice does not reign supreme. Millions have found an irresistible fascination in that living voice, whilst even those who are in open opposition, or harbour a secret enmity against it, are often willing to acknowledge that if there be an infallible authority upon earth, it resides in the Catholic Church.

At this point we wish to call attention to a certain method in our Lord's plan of action, which showed His opponents that He not only spoke to them as an authorized Teacher, but intended to condemn them to their face in His conferences before the people and those who professed themselves His followers. An example of this occurred when certain Scribes and Pharisees were apparently sent from Jerusalem to watch His words, and carry back some excuse for false accusation. Like most cavillers, they soon found some

colour for complaint. In this instance it was the fact of the disciples eating with unwashed hands, whereby they transgressed the tradition of the ancients. After having silenced them by proving that they themselves transgressed in far more weighty matters, and were, as He called them, "hypocrites," He turned to the multitude there assembled, and gathering them round Him, said: "Hear ye and understand." Then, in a series of metaphors and parables, He condemned the spirit of the Pharisees for regarding certain points of exterior ceremonial as more important than purity of heart, and the law of truth and justice. Thus did our Lord claim for Himself the fullest attention of His hearers, and rebuke with all freedom and authority the rulers of the people in the presence of the multitude.¹ A like remark applies to the solemn discourse addressed by Christ to the populace and to His own disciples in the Temple but a few days before His death, in which He warns them against copying the example of the Scribes and Pharisees, although obedience was to be rendered to them for the reason that they sat in the chair of Moses. Our Lord dwells in detail to His disciples on the ambition, arrogance, and artfulness of the Pharisees, and then turning to the Scribes He commenced His solemn denunciations, which must have thrilled the hearts of His opponents with a strange terror, whilst those who believed in and loved Him might well feel their hearts burn with intenser love and admiration of one Who thus fearlessly proclaimed the authority with which He was endued. Never had the Temple resounded with invectives so terrible, or so certain of fulfilment; and, if we may venture to say it, never perhaps had Jesus appeared more resplendent or more

¹ St. Matt. xv. 7, 10, seq.

beautiful in the majesty of His Divine authority. His speech was a lightening ray from the Eternal Throne, as though the heavens had opened and for a moment revealed the terrible splendour of the Divine Justice. When He ceased speaking no answer came—eloquent testimony in itself to the presence of an authority more than human.

Even in His ordinary relations with His disciples, or with others, our Lord's language and bearing bespoke the authority which belonged to Him of right, as one Whose inherent dignity entitled Him to command. Thus we read: "He gave orders to pass over the water."¹ Before the multiplication of loaves in the desert: "He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the grass."² After raising the daughter of Jairus to life: "He commanded that something should be given her to eat."³ Similar expressions are to be met with repeatedly throughout the Gospel narrative, and as the ministers declared, "Never hath man spoken like this Man," so was there a grace, a calm majesty in the exercise of His authority, which was altogether different from the haughty and imperious exactions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and created an influence such as none had ever experienced before. In the presence of all indifferently He not only acted upon but openly asserted the authority of His teaching, and the obedience that was due to Him. Later on we shall hear Him declaring by word of mouth the ground on which He claimed to be believed in and received, and this was His unity with the Father Who had sent Him.

As early in His Ministry as the Sermon on the Mount, we find Christ telling the people that not every one who called Him "Lord, Lord," should enter into

¹ St. Matt. viii. 18.

² St. Matt. xiv. 19.

³ St. Mark v. 43.

the Kingdom of Heaven, "but he that did the will of His Father Who was in Heaven"—he alone should enter into that Kingdom. He predicted that many should come in the last day seeking admittance into the Kingdom who would say to Him: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name?" but then, as our Lord declared Himself, "will I profess unto you I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity," by which words He acknowledged Himself to be the Judge to Whom all judgment had been given. In conclusion He says that "every one who hears His words and does them, shall be likened to a wise man building his house upon a rock," and when the storm came "the house fell not, for it was founded on a rock." And contrariwise, "Every one who heard His words, and did them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand," and when the storm came "it fell, and great was the fall thereof."¹ On another occasion, in the sermon He delivered on the plain, just after choosing His Apostles, when a very great multitude was also present, He asked them: "Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"² repeating His previous expostulation and argument. After the Last Supper He remarked to His Apostles, "You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am," adding, "If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."³

Here it is to be especially observed that the calm dignity characterizing the exercise of our Lord's authority towards all was, in His relations with His Apostles, qualified by a profound tenderness, which bound their hearts more and more closely to Him.

¹ St. Matt. vii. 21—29.

² St. Luke vi. 46.

³ St. John xiii. 13, 14.

They had acknowledged Him for their Lord and Master, and so indeed He was, according to that avowal whereby He would both reward their confidence and confirm their faith. How greatly must their hearts have been touched by His gentle announcement so full of significance, and with what new ardour must they have been impelled to yield themselves up to His guidance, be the consequences for themselves what they might. Something of the same kind is experienced not unfrequently by those who pass from heresy into the bosom of the Church. The voice of Divine authority has fallen upon their hearts with a charm surpassing that of any other voice, and has awakened chords which only a Divine hand could reach; and, though "the sword" of separation from father and mother, and brother and sister, and house and lands, and all that they have loved on earth, should be the result, they feel the only course for them is to follow whithersoever the voice shall lead them. The same also is sometimes experienced by those of whom our Lord requires a painful sacrifice, or the acceptance of some bitter sorrow. He makes His voice heard deep in the soul as the voice of the "Lord and Master," and the more sensible the soul becomes of His sovereign right to command its obedience, the more closely is it held bound by the chains of love. Such are the mysterious ways of Divine charity which experience alone can teach, and this is what we see exemplified in those who believed and loved our Lord when He walked upon earth.

Even to those in whose hearts love had not yet been awakened, but who, in consequence of the authority with which they heard Him speak, believed in Him, our Lord held out as a reward the being

numbered amongst His disciples, a favour which could be obtained only through perseverance in His word, that is, fidelity to His teaching and faith in His doctrine.¹ It will not then be any matter of surprise that the love and devotion of the Apostles should develop rapidly towards the close of our Lord's presence with them. They had seen Him at all times behaving like one "subject to authority," as described by the Centurion; but latterly they beheld Him courting rather than avoiding disputations with the rulers and chief priests, whom He put to silence and openly and authoritatively denounced. The Apostles had witnessed the exercise of our Lord's power long before in the marvellous works wrought by Him, but the force of His language in recent discussions with His enemies, in addition to the dignity and authority of His solemn utterances, gave a new character to their esteem and greatly elevated, as well as intensified, their love for their Lord and Master, imparting to them a deeper insight into the truths which He taught them regarding His Divine Personality and oneness with the Father. Yet were they to see more striking manifestations of the royal dignity inherent in our Lord, ennobling His every word and adding lustre to every action.

It is not without design that we have left to the close of the present chapter those events which, more than any other, exhibit to us His authority in its grandest proportions. The first in order of these concluding events is Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on the Sunday preceding His Passion. Meek indeed, and seated on an ass, but with all the majesty of His Kingdom not of this world, reflected

¹ St. John viii. 31, 32.

in His whole bearing, He descended the Mount of Olives amid the loud Hosannas of the exulting multitude. The hearts of the disciples beat high with enthusiasm at the sight of their Master's triumph, and the Pharisees among the crowd, moved with envy, bade Him rebuke their loud acclaim. Jesus calmly assured the objectors that if these held their peace the very stones would cry out, and so the procession passed along triumphant. On entering Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred, saying: Who is this? But our Lord went forward to the Temple unmolested, where, as St. Mark tells us, "having viewed all things round about"—words which indicate the dignified self-possession with which He acted—"when now the even-tide was come He went out to Bethania with the Twelve."¹ He had, however, already drawn down upon Himself the envious remonstrances of the chief priests and scribes, who, although they had seen the wonderful things He openly did in healing the blind and the lame found at the Temple gates, yet upon hearing the children crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," indignantly complained: "Hearest Thou what these say? Yea," He replied, referring them as usual to their Scripture, "have you never read, Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"²

On the following day our Lord entered the Temple, and by the invisible force of His authority, rather than by the weight of the scourge which He held, drove the buyers and sellers from its precincts, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and forbidding any vessel to be carried through its sacred courts. This act of openly displayed authority led to that interro-

¹ St. Mark xi. 11.

² St. Matt. xxi. 15, 16.

gation on the part of the High Priest which introduced the conversations He held with them, wherein the Divinity seemed to reveal itself through the veil of the Sacred Humanity. As we listen to the thrilling tones in which the still more thrilling words were spoken by the Divine Wisdom in answer to His opponents, love and adoration are deepened in our souls, and we marvel at the obduracy engendered by malice within the hearts of those who heard Him, yet would not yield themselves up to the persuasiveness of an authority that the very multitudes could not resist.

Long before, on one of those numerous occasions in which He had asserted His dignity and referred to His unity with the Father, He had told them He was "the Light of the world," and bright as had been its shining from the commencement of His manifestation before men, it appeared now to attain its fullest splendour, just before its temporary eclipse. After the cleansing of the Temple, Jesus was teaching the people when the chief priests and ancients came to Him with the question: "By what authority dost Thou these things? and who hath given Thee this authority?" His reply brought humiliation to His questioners. "I also will ask you one word, which if you shall tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things." He then inquired of them as to the mission of His Precursor. Silence followed, for they were perplexed how to answer. If they acknowledged the mission of St. John to be Divine, they would then condemn themselves for not receiving Him Whose coming the Baptist had foretold. If, on the other hand, they were to deny the authority of St. John, the people who all believed in him would rise up against

them, being both present and the witnesses of their perplexity. Compelled to give some answer, they could only say: "We know not." "Neither do I tell you," said Jesus, "by what authority I do these things." Having thus silenced them, our Lord took up the discourse in two parables, compelling them by a question put at the end of the first one to give unconscious evidence against themselves, and asserting in explanation of the parable, that the publicans and sinners should, because of their faith and repentance, go into Heaven before them who had remained obdurate in their pride. Jesus pursued the same course in the second parable, and obliged them to convict themselves by the reply which they could not avoid giving to His interrogation. At the close He referred them to the Psalm in which He is Himself spoken of as "the Stone which the builders rejected," and which was to become the "Chief Corner-stone." Finally He declared that the Kingdom of God should be taken away from them, and given to a nation which would yield fruit in due season.

So enraged were the chief priests and Pharisees at the victories gained over them by the authority which our Lord wielded, and at the public humiliation to which He had subjected them, that they would have seized upon Him at once to destroy Him, had they not feared the multitude, who if not able to comprehend all that was involved in His word, yet believed in Him as a great Prophet. It would lead us far beyond our proposed limits were we to follow minutely all the subsequent incidents recorded in the sacred narrative. It describes our Lord as continuing to speak to them in parables, to the discomfiture of the ancients, who at length went and consulted among themselves how

to ensnare Him in His speech. We find the Pharisees coming first to Him, concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, but they, confounded by the wisdom of His answer, "wondered, and leaving Him went their way." The same day came to Him the Sadducees, inquiring of Him as to the resurrection from the dead, in which they did not believe. When He told them that they erred, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God," then "the multitudes hearing it, were in admiration at His doctrine." The Sadducees had no more to say, and the Pharisees hearing of their defeat came once more to "tempt Him," asking: "Which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Our Lord briefly but decisively replied by quoting the very words of the Law itself. He took advantage, however, of the presence of the Pharisees to propose to them a question on His own part, asking: "What think you of Christ? Whose Son is He?" Upon their answering, "David's," He immediately perplexes them by referring to the inspired words of David in which he had in spirit called Christ his "Lord."¹ "And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."² Then it was that our Lord, having by the majesty of His Divine bearing imposed silence on His opponents, turned to the multitude and to His disciples, and addressed to them that memorable denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the doctors of the Law, followed by the prediction of God's coming vengeance upon them, as has been already fully related.

When we read the narrative of our Lord's words whereby He confronted His enemies, and place collec-

¹ Psalm cix. 1.² St. Matt. xxii. 15, 16.

tively before us all the instances of His openly displayed authority, then the splendour of His Divine wisdom, and the majesty of each action and address strike us with ten-fold force, as compared with the isolated evidences of it in detail. We cannot fail to recognize that our Lord was actuated by the "Spirit of Counsel" and by motives of highest prudence in the severe language and stern display of authority with which He sometimes armed Himself, when rebuking the enemies of the truth. Obdurate and proud as they were, had our Lord clothed His words always with His accustomed meekness and humility, they would have taken courage to be all the more overbearing; and an apparent victory over Him would have most certainly injured His influence and greatly confirmed them in their pride. Nor was this double action without effect as an example of the principle of contrast. Under every circumstance our Lord had ever manifested towards all who approached Him in a kindred spirit, a gentleness in the use of His authority that was in fact inalienable from the dignity of His Person, and explained the secret of His power of attraction. If, then, when confronting His opponents, He assumed, in contrast to this, a severe and unbending demeanour, the difference between these two attitudes brought out in stronger relief the love and gentleness which made His authority so persuasive with those who could discern its Divine character.

The manifestation of our Lord's authority during those days which preceded His Death, is marked by a character all its own, and is as distinguishable from what we have witnessed in His disputations with the chief priests, so fully detailed in the Gospel of St. John, as that again is distinct from the authority we have

seen Him put forth in the earlier stages of His Ministry. Take, for example, His bearing towards His Apostles at the Last Supper. Who could fail to discern in every word He uttered, in every warning He gave, as well as in His every action, the work of a Divine Master, Himself subject to authority. Yet with how great human sympathy, with what touching sadness was that authority now mingled. Henceforth indeed He would cease to appear as a Teacher amongst men; no longer would He justify His doctrine or denounce His enemies, but when justice and truth demanded, He would still reprove those who infringed them to the detriment of His Father's glory. This is what we see when the High Priest asked Him concerning His disciples and His doctrine. With great self-possession He referred Caiphas to those who had heard Him teaching in the synagogue. He refused to give testimony of Himself which it was a flagrant illegality to require from Him. The like display of Divine authority to rebuke those who violated justice we encounter when our Lord stood before Pilate, and was asked if He were King of the Jews. Our Lord's reply was a tacit reproof, for Pilate had been prompted to put this question by others, who had accused our Lord of one crime and wished to influence Pilate to condemn Him for another. This was an occasion which demanded the Divine authority of Jesus to be exercised in the cause of truth and justice, and He did not fail so to employ it.

We afterwards find our Lord manifesting His Divine unchanging right to point out the way of truth and justice, and to rebuke any deviation from it, during His last short conversation with Pilate in answer to the question, Whence He came. Jesus vouchsafed

him no reply, and this irritated the Roman Governor, who began to speak of his power to do with our Lord as he pleased. Whereto our Lord replied in those memorable words: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above"¹—an answer which struck a strange fear into Pilate. Once more, from the tree of the Cross, amidst the torments of the agony, there rent the air the tones of one Whose authority was stamped with Divinity. Low and sad indeed they sounded, but they contained a substantial power for effecting what in one case they promised, and in the other bestowed. The first was the absolute promise of Paradise to the repentant thief, implying full power and authority to fulfil what it promised. The second, and the very last authoritative word our Lord uttered upon earth, was the commendation—the bestowal of His Mother upon His Beloved Disciple on the one side, and on the other the gift of all mankind, through the person of St. John, as spiritual children to His Mother.

Who is there that contemplates our Lord with faith and love, and can deny the attractive virtue of an authority in the exercise of which His Majesty is, as everywhere else, "beautiful above all the sons of men"?

¹ St. John xix. 11.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS GENTLENESS.

The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men (Titus ii. 11).

GENTLENESS, the excellence of which we are about to discuss in the present chapter, possesses its own peculiar attractions which no one can well resist. True, there are persons who remain impervious to its influence, and such are incapable of appreciating its beauty. The very absence of all sympathy with it acts as a reproach to them and produces in them a constant feeling of irritation. But these are happily the exceptions, and with the greater number of men gentleness has a charm which will even atone for many deficiencies in other respects.

This quality is to be traced, however, to various sources, for it may be natural, or acquired, or supernatural. It is natural when it is the result of individual temperament. It is acquired when it proceeds from habits of refinement and cultivation, or from the religious teaching peculiar to religious orders. It is supernatural when it flows involuntarily from habitual union of the soul with God, and under this last head it is seen in all its grace and beauty. From what has been said it will be seen that it is not the interior sweetness and gentleness of our Lord's inner character, nor His tenderness in His dealing spiritually with souls, nor the

intrinsic beauty enriching all His actions within, that we are now considering; these will be treated of in their respective chapters. We consider rather His external manifestation of this gentleness in all He did or said, under every circumstance alike. Even in the exercise of His authority there was a gentle majesty, which was not so much an accompaniment as an integral and inalienable part of it, in the same way that royal dignity is inseparable from the kingly throne.

In order to form as just an appreciation as possible of the exceeding beauty of the gentleness of Jesus, we must call to mind the sources, both Divine and human, from whence it flowed. In His Sacred Person we contemplate "Perfect God and perfect Man"—*Perfectus Deus, perfectus homo*. He reveals to us therein, and brings down to the level of our finite intelligence, the gentleness with which the invisible God has wrought all His marvellous works. As we contemplate our Blessed Lord walking with His disciples on the shores of Genesareth, or conversing with them as they went through the cornfields, we are reminded of the afternoon walks in Paradise which God took with Adam, and the gentleness with which He drew from him the acknowledgment of his disobedience. The grace, so to speak, which manifested itself in every act of God in His Essence, and which cannot be separated from His Divine character, necessarily shone in the Son of God Who came forth from Him—His Word, His Image, perfect in all things, even as He is perfect.

The first source, then, of the gentleness of Jesus was the uncreated sanctity of the Eternal Son to Whom His Humanity was hypostatically united. It was the revelation of the gentle majesty of the everlasting King of ages, "Whose Kingdom shall have no end." It was

the result also of that second unction with which His Humanity was anointed, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in all its plenitude, filling the Soul of Jesus with all its human and formal perfection, and enabling us to see in Him the model of a perfect Man. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the ripe production of its seven-fold gifts, and these gifts we know dwelt in the Soul of Jesus without measure. Now mildness is one of those fruits, and the exterior gentleness which was one of the characteristics of our Divine Lord was a spontaneous bloom and lustre upon that fruit. We have tarried to trace back this attractive feature in our Lord to its sources, in order that we may arrive at a more profound knowledge of His loveliness, and because He, being our highest model of humanity in its perfection, it is extremely important for us to recognize the springs from whence proceeded those external graces, each of which was one of the "cords of Adam" so frequently alluded to in these pages.

Although it does not enter into our design to write a treatise on Christian morality or perfection, it will not be out of place, here and there, to pause a few moments in order to draw some reflections which may be useful in reference to ourselves. We should premise that, although exterior gentleness bears a close relation to the fruit of mildness, it may likewise be referred to the gifts of wisdom and of piety. The first of these enables the soul to know God clearly, so that, ravished with His beauty, it becomes united to Him and made one spirit with Him—"But he, who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit"¹—while piety infuses into the soul an habitual tenderness towards God and all creatures for His sake. If it is thus with souls to whom the Holy

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Spirit communicates His treasures in proportion to their capacity for receiving them, we may judge what must have been the exterior gentleness of Him in Whom the Spirit dwelt in all its plenitude.

St. John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, after telling us that "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us," adds, "and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Not only was the character of the Father shown us in that of His Incarnate Son, but, as has been already said, the exterior grace and manner with which the Son wrought His works, and spoke and acted on all occasions, disclosed to men the gentleness of the invisible Lord of hosts, Whom the Church loves to address as "most meek God"—*Deus mitissime*. Gentleness, then, with Jesus was not an acquired feature characterizing His external bearing, but it flowed spontaneously from His inherent perfection, and from that meekness of His own Most Sacred Heart to which He had Himself borne witness: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."¹ It was conspicuous in Him everywhere. We have seen it mingled with and imparting a character to His authority, distinguishing the latter from the turbulent imperiousness of men who either assume authority to themselves, or seek to retain it by a display of dictatorial assertion, which carries unreality on its face in the utter absence of all true dignity.

This gentleness shone forth with equal loveliness not only in the performance of the greater works which He wrought in co-operation with the Father by virtue of His unity of Essence with Him, as, for instance, His miracles; nor only in those other actions which

¹ St. Matt. xi. 29.

were manifestly the outpouring of a gentle, loving, compassionate Heart entirely under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. It appeared also in the most ordinary actions of His Sacred Humanity, as when He walked, or sat down on the mountain side, or in the synagogues, or when He conversed, eat, or even turned His Head to look at any object. We might refer in detail to the Gospel narrative in order to assure ourselves of the special gracefulness of every least action on the part of our Lord. But we forbear, lest we should encroach on the subject-matter of other chapters. Enough has been said to convince us that the actions of a Divine Person in human flesh must have been not only intrinsically beautiful, but moreover singularly attractive in the manner of their performance.

Faith could teach us all this, were we to recall what has been said as to the sources whence the gentleness of Jesus flowed. But we shall still more perfectly learn the same sweet lesson in that careful loving contemplation which enables us to exclaim with holy Job: "With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now mine eye seeth Thee."¹

It remains for us only, in this chapter, to add a few reflections affecting ourselves in connection with what has been said. We have no wish to imply that every one who gives the example of gentle bearing is necessarily a holy person. Such gentleness may proceed from divers causes, as we have already remarked. It may be the result of natural character or temperament, or of accidental circumstances. It may proceed from secular culture or from religious training, the value of which we are far from depreciating. The latter we think especially well of, inasmuch as it tends to form

¹ Job xlii. 5.

habits of interior recollection and prayer which open the way to that which is our greatest good on earth, namely, union with God.

Gentleness, however, in its most perfect form has not for its motive the prospect of a good to be attained, it is rather the result of a good already possessed. The saints whose hearts dwelt where their only treasure really was, whose faculties were habitually occupied with Jesus and with what related to Him, were gentle because the "mind of Christ" dwelt in them, and His Holy Spirit shed over them its abiding influence. They were formed interiorly to His likeness, and connaturally the resemblance communicated itself to the exterior. As the work of their sanctification advanced, their exterior manifested an ever-growing conformity to the beauty of the Saint of saints. But it may be objected—were all the saints only stereotyped likenesses one of another, and was there among them no individuality of character? By no means was this the case. Charity, the queen of all the virtues, is ever clad in golden raiment, "but she is surrounded with variety;"¹ just as we are also told: "Star differeth from star in glory."² Nevertheless there are certain instincts, if we may so call them, common to all the saints; and of these gentleness is one, being, as we have seen, an outcome of the interior union maintained between the soul and God by means of habitual prayer. Now there never was a saint whose soul was not thoroughly imbued with the spirit of prayer, as distinguished from the man who simply repeats many prayers; and consequently, as gentleness is an instinct of souls formed after the spirit of true prayer, it is common to all the saints, without dependence on their individual charac-

¹ Psalm xlv. 10.

² 1 Cor. xv. 41.

teristics. It is true we are told of many instances in which the saints were prompted by zeal for the glory of the Lord of hosts to act, on particular occasions, from a strong and excited feeling that would seem to contradict the statement we have made. To this it may be replied that the very same objection can be urged against our Blessed Lord's own occasional actions. We know that He drove out the money-changers from His Father's house, and overthrew the tables of them that sold doves, making use of a scourge of cords for this purpose, and this manner of action He repeated subsequently, and expressed His zealous indignation in terms of severe reproof. Even here we cannot doubt of the perfect interior calm with which this act of zeal was accompanied. In fact we could not without irreverence imagine our Lord overthrowing the tables with noisy roughness, or driving the offenders before Him, after the manner of some parents who may be seen driving out their children into the streets, upbraiding them in angry tones, and beating them with violence.

Even when our Divine Lord addressed to the chief priests and scribes the terrible denunciations already referred to, when He stigmatized the Pharisees as hypocrites, according to their just deserts, when He spoke so sternly of Herod—"Go, and tell that fox"¹—even then we may be assured that His voice, though stern and condemnatory, never transgressed the bounds of moderation, nor did it do violence to His accustomed self-control. No movement discernible in Him was out of harmony with the meek but dignified bearing of one Whose soul was in uninterrupted communication with God. As it was with Jesus, so is it with His saints, in

¹ St. Luke xiii. 32.

proportion to the completeness of their union with Him and conformity to His likeness. Occasions may and do call forth their zeal in the cause of God, and yet their words and general conduct are even then tempered with gentleness observable in their most ordinary actions, a feature distinguishing them from the common herd of men.

We have considered this characteristic in our Blessed Lord separately, as distinct from the intrinsic beauty of His words and actions, because we believe that the gentleness which was at all times discernible in Him, if reflected upon at all, is seldom regarded as the inevitable and natural consequence of His Divine Personality and of the perfection of His human Soul. Losing sight of this, the quality of gentleness does not obtain from us the appreciation which it deserves. If indeed we do value it as one of the pleasing results of refinement and cultivation, or an acquirement of religious growth and self-discipline, we are far from esteeming it as one of the unconscious manifestations of interior holiness. In order to assure ourselves that it is so, if supernatural in its source and its motives, let us for a moment contemplate its opposite, and ask ourselves then, if we could by any possibility imagine this latter existing in our Blessed Lord. We have probably witnessed very good and pious persons, men possessed of a fair measure of charity, patience, zeal, and even perhaps of humility, in whose exterior there is no trace of the gentleness of our Lord. The gestures of such persons and their ordinary actions are too often rough, hasty, and inconsiderate. Their voice is loud, their diction uncultured, their decisions and opinions pronounced with a dogmatism calculated to preclude others from any reply, unless they are prepared to

dispute each controverted point. The very walk of those we allude to is noisy and precipitate, giving intimation of their coming long before they appear in sight; the ear too is pained by their violence in opening and shutting doors and windows. Place such a worthy individual in juxtaposition with Jesus, the model of all grace and gentleness, and make careful note of the contrast. In what lies the absence of a single point of resemblance to His Divinely Human meekness? It is in the lack of any interior conformity between the two. The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit of Jesus are restricted in the fulness of their flow into our souls, because we have not perfectly disposed ourselves to receive them. But how can we be like to Jesus, if we are not filled with His Spirit? Our hearts are full of trifles—not, it may be, to the extent of sin—but of material cares, of creatures, of self in some way or other. Thus do we practise little recollection or solitude of heart, and without this it is worse than folly, it is presumption, to pretend to acquire a spirit of prayer and union, and of the habitual presence of God. It is, however, only in solitary communing with Him that we shall learn to know His loveliness and the beauty of His Incarnate Son, until, through the love enkindled by that knowledge, we become transformed into His likeness.

It has been already said that gentleness does not necessarily constitute holiness, and doubtless many persons may be gentle in their exterior who are not closely united interiorly to God, but we may be well assured that there has never been a saint in whom meekness was not one chief feature of his resemblance to our Lord. It is one of the many beautiful traits which the saints have learnt in their interior com-

panionship with Him, and unconsciously the brightness thereof has fallen upon and pervaded their own souls.

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS MANNER OF DEALING WITH THE SOULS OF MEN.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him. . . . He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears (Isaias xi. 2, 3).

In reading the sacred record of God's dealings with His ancient people we cannot fail to be struck by the evidence they afford of the profound and, to human intelligences, incomprehensible wisdom which presided over every dispensation.

We see Him now striking the rebellious with prompt punishment, at another time delaying the execution of His just anger, "overlooking the sins of men"¹ to give them time for repentance. "One He putteth down, and another He lifteth up."² Such is His dealing not alone with individuals, but likewise with whole nations. We behold Him either showing forth the majesty of His justice, or else revealing the tenderness of a mother. But looking through the whole of the history of God's conduct towards man, we recognize in its entire economy the presence of one and the same everlasting love—His dearest attribute, extending over all His works and shedding its beauty everywhere. It is like the sweet clear strains of some

¹ Wisdom xi. 24.

² Psalm lxxiv. 8.

exquisite melody played on the chords of the harp by a master-hand, the sound of which reaches the ear even amid the sweep of wind instruments by which it is accompanied. When He punishes His people, the sacred writings call it "His strange work," to which His anger alone can impel Him. "He shall be angry . . . that He may do His work, His strange work; that He may perform His work. His work is strange to Him."¹ Whilst, on the other hand, "He delighteth in mercy."

But, despite this revelation of the forbearance of God during an interval of four thousand years, He was forced to complain that, although "the ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood."² So He sent His eternally spoken Word Who should speak to the eyes of His people, and in human flesh show forth to them the "God Who loveth souls."³ Only in that life where all things will be seen "face to face" shall we comprehend "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the wisdom and love which governed all the dealings of Jesus with souls when He walked upon earth, the records of which we possess in the holy Gospels.

There are separate classes of persons to be considered in relation to our present subject, and amongst those classes numerous examples can be cited of widely different conduct on the part of our Lord. Here it is that we see Him fulfilling in His Sacred Person the ancient prophecies that announced Him under the title of "Teacher of justice."⁴ On the other hand, He was the Shepherd going before His flock. Here also is He

¹ *Isaias* xxviii. 21.

Isaias i. 3.

³ *Wisdom* xi. 27.

⁴ *Joel* ii. 23.

the Living Book for the instruction of those who are called to govern, direct, and save souls, and to form them to perfection. We have but to meditate attentively on the various dealings of our Lord with souls, in order to discern in their full splendour the working of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by Whom He was led in all things. We mark a foreshadowing of the diversity and of the fitness of manner in which our Lord dealt with different persons and classes, when we regard the preaching of His Precursor, whom, in the third chapter of St. Luke, we find giving particular rules of conduct for each of those who applied to him. We will in the first place consider our Divine Lord in His relations with the people generally, before passing on to contemplate His manner of acting with a distinct class of persons. Let us take our view from a point sufficiently elevated, and ever bear in mind that, although in the corporal works of mercy in which we see Christ continually occupied, He was "touched with compassion" at the sight of every material suffering, yet it was pre-eminently as Physician of souls and the Saviour of men that He always acted, and we must trace back to His Divine Mission the cause of every work which He wrought.

Of the statement here laid down the Gospel affords ample evidence in the various narratives it gives of the cures and other miracles performed by our Lord. Without pretending to notice all the instances illustrative of our Lord's primary design in the marvellous corporal cures He effected, we shall adduce some, in the hope that they will elicit a greater readiness to trace the same motive in the numerous occasions which our limits oblige us to pass unmentioned. The first instance to be considered is the cure of the paralytic

man, remarkable for the fact that our Lord commenced by absolving him from his sins. It seems that He desired to teach both the man himself and those who surrounded him that freedom from sin was of far greater importance than deliverance from corporal infirmity, the latter grace being as it were a surplus, flowing from the infinite goodness of God. He seemed to indicate, moreover, that, frequently at least, the chains of sin must be removed before the health of the body can be effected.

The same teaching is clearly discernible in the cure of the infirm man at the Probatic Pool. Here our Lord began to work by the method, so habitual with Him, of putting a question to the persons He intended to benefit, in order to draw from them the acknowledgment of their misery: "Wilt thou be made whole?"¹ Upon the man's confession of his impotency to descend into the water, the cure is instantaneously effected, and his faith in the authority of one Whose power could perform such a miracle, seems to have induced him to obey unhesitatingly our Lord's word that he should take up his bed and walk. He deemed it sufficient justification for the infringement of the Sabbath rest, brought against him by the Jews, that he had done this at the command of the Man Who had made him whole. Jesus afterwards finding him in the Temple told him to sin no more, lest some worse thing happen, hinting at a possible fact that, in this instance, his corporal malady was the result of sin, or at least its punishment. We find two blind men attracted by the fame of the miracle wrought upon the daughter of Jairus, following our Lord from thence and crying out to Him: "Have mercy on us, O Son of

¹ St. John v. 6.

David!" It would seem that our Lord suffered them to persevere in this appeal to His mercy, until He had reached the house where He was about to remain. Then the blind men "came to Him," as we may suppose, drawing nearer to Him and probably kneeling at His feet. He begins by testing their faith. "Do you believe that I can do this unto you?" They answer: "Yea, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, telling them that this was done unto them according to their faith.¹ The cure of the blind man at Jericho resembles in some points the preceding cure, attended, however, with additional circumstances illustrating our Lord's extreme and tender care that those who sought any favour at His hands should not be deterred from approaching Him and making known their requests.

When Bartimeus heard the sound of the multitude he asked what this meant, and they told him "that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by."² Immediately he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me:" and, as those near rebuked him and bade him desist, he only continued all the more. Our Lord being pleased with his perseverance stopped, so that the whole multitude who accompanied Him had to do the same. Our Lord did not advance to meet him, as He had done when the centurion came to tell Him that his servant was sick, replying to him unasked, "I will come and heal him." In the present instance He commanded Bartimeus to be brought to Him, adding, when he was sufficiently near, "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" In nearly every occasion we remark how our Lord requires the expression of a desire on the part of the recipients of His favours, together with an acknowledgment of their need and

¹ St. Matt. ix. 27—29.

² St. Luke xviii. 37.

profession of faith in His power to assist them, these requirements being figurative of the dispositions He demands in those on whom He longs to confer benefits in the spiritual order. The moment the blind man replies: "Lord, that I may see," the miracle is at once wrought, and he then followed Jesus glorifying God, and became probably one of His disciples. In the case of the blind man of Bethsaida, our Lord puts his faith to a severer test. He does not appear to have come of himself for relief, but to have been brought by others, who besought our Lord to touch him. The request was complied with, but the man's sight was only partially restored. When Jesus asked him if he saw anything, he replied that he saw "men as it were trees, walking," by which he testified that as yet he possessed only imperfect sight. When Jesus again touched his eyes, "he began to see;" and finally his sight was completely restored, so that "he saw all things clearly."¹ There exists between the manner of the restoration of this man to sight and the method often employed by our Lord in bringing souls to the knowledge of the truth a striking analogy, which we cannot but recognize. Some, after the manner of the blind men, receive spiritual sight instantaneously, at the first touch of grace, whilst others, like him of Bethsaida, receive it but gradually and after repeated communications. Such men's faith has not been sufficiently awakened to induce them to seek the truth of themselves, but, as in the instance above mentioned, they are brought to Jesus either by fortuitous circumstances or by some friendly hand.

In the miracles which our Lord wrought we should attentively consider the various persons over whom

they were evidently designed to exercise a salutary influence. Rarely, if ever, were they performed exclusively for the benefit of the direct recipient. Sometimes it was toward the immediate kindred or friends that the spiritual good was to be directed, and frequently our Lord had in view His own Apostles and disciples, or again the rulers, or else the Jews, that hearing of the wonderful works of Jesus they might recognize in Him the Christ Who had been foretold. Of this we have one instance in the casting out of the dumb spirit from the boy who was brought to our Lord directly after His descent from the Mount of the Transfiguration. The sacred narrative tells us how the disciples had tried to cast out the spirit but had failed, as the father of the boy informed our Lord on approaching Him with the prayer that He would do something for them in their distress. After giving our Lord many details regarding his son, he concluded by begging: "If Thou canst do anything, help us, having compassion on us."¹

It would seem as though our Lord desired to elevate and increase his faith, since the man had shown only a half-confidence in the efficiency of Him to Whose compassion rather than power he more directly appealed. Jesus therefore assured him: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Beautiful indeed was the father's outburst of feeling, which told of the rapid growth of faith in his breast, rendered still more striking by the humility of the terms in which it was expressed. "Immediately he cried out with tears saying: I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief." The work of grace found entrance into the soul of the father, yielding abundant fruit, and

¹ St. Mark ix. 21.

straightway Jesus cast out the evil spirit from his son. But not alone for his sake had that great miracle been performed. A vast multitude was present who heard and witnessed all that passed, and there, too, were the Apostles who had in vain endeavoured to cast out the spirit before our Lord's coming. His first words had been addressed especially to them, after hearing the fact related by the father of the possessed child. Our Lord upbraided them for their want of faith, saying: "O incredulous generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him to Me." His disciples afterwards came to Him secretly, asking why they had been unable to cast out the spirit, when our Lord told them that this kind could go out only by prayer and fasting. Thus their failure was ascribed by their Master to three causes: want of sufficient faith, inattention to the efficacy of prayer, and neglect of self-imposed acts of mortification; such being the indispensable requisites for those labours in the vineyard of the Lord, to which they, above all, were now called.

In His answer to the woman of Canaan our Lord has given us another striking instance of His manner of treating those in whom He designed that the bestowal of corporal favours should prepare them for receiving "the better gifts," and that their cure should be a type to all future generations of the spiritual graces He would confer on the souls of men. This woman came loudly beseeching our Lord to have mercy on her, for her daughter was possessed by a devil. But He "answered her not a word," although His Heart was touched by the earnestness which caused the poor suppliant to cry out to Him: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David!" Still more discourag-

ing was it for this woman that our Lord appeared to acquiesce in the suggestion of His disciples that He should send her away, "for she crieth after us." This we learn from the words He at length addressed to her: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel," words intimating in the hearing of the woman that she had no share in His Mission, because she was a Gentile. As in some souls the rapid growth of love is promoted by a heavy trial, so was it with the faith of this woman, for on hearing our Lord's discouraging words she all the more came and adored Him, saying: "Lord, help me." Christ's next reply was even colder than the former. "It is not good," He said, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs," making reference again to her being a Gentile. This was indeed a severe test of her humility, her faith, and her perseverance. But the Heart of Jesus, which all the while was yearning to bestow on her the favour she had sought, and many a greater one besides, was now wholly vanquished by the lowliness of her self-abjection expressed in the words: "Yea, Lord, for whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Her ordeal was at an end and the joyful moment of reward had come. Not only was her prayer granted, but she drew from Jesus Himself the open expression of His admiration: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt."¹ Still more pointed are the words of St. Mark: "For this saying, go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Thus our Lord seems to intimate that it was the woman's extreme humility, as well as her faith, which had merited the granting of her petition.

¹ St. Matt. xv. 22—25.

Another example of a similar, though less severe, test is that conveyed in our Lord's answer to the ruler who came praying Him to go and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. The reply of Jesus contained the reproach, "Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." Instead of discouragement, the ruler appears to derive only additional confidence from our Lord's apparent coldness. "Lord, come down, before that my son die," is his touching appeal, rendered still more precious in the eyes of our Lord by the fact of its following close after the rebuke administered to him. Our Lord tells him: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The man believed the word, and on returning to his house found it verified, so that "himself believed and his whole house."¹ From the effect of our Lord's assumed coldness and apparently designed discouragement we may gather how great must have been the grace accompanying even those words which were, humanly speaking, least calculated to win souls to confidence in His goodness. Notwithstanding the severe trials to which He put their faith, and perhaps still more their humility, they never left Him through loss of hope, nor ceased to implore His aid. On the contrary, as we see, their faith appears to grow stronger, and their humility become deeper, until an attraction towards our Lord for His own sake, rather than for the sake of His gifts, springs up and takes possession of their souls.

Other lines of action adopted by our Lord with respect to those who approached Him exemplify the variety of His manner of dealing with souls, and help us to form a more just appreciation of the richness of His grace. Thus we read that, after our Lord had

¹ St. John iv. 46—53.

delivered a certain man from a legion of devils in the country of the Gerasens, the people found him "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." In their terror, however, at hearing that the whole herd of swine had been precipitated into the sea, the multitude besought our Lord to depart from their coasts, which He, in His meekness, consented to do, going up into the ship to return from whence He had come. The man out of whom He had cast the devils, seeing Him about to depart, entreated that he might be allowed to remain with Him. "But Jesus sent him away," or as St. Mark expresses it, "admitted him not," an expression which would imply that our Lord declined to receive him amongst His more immediate disciples. But He recompensed the man's pious desire by expressly sending him on a mission to publish the praises of God, and thus become an apostle in his own country.¹ After a somewhat similar manner, when our Lord saw at Capharnaum great multitudes gathering round, He gave orders to pass over to the opposite side of the lake. At this moment, a certain Scribe coming up offered to place himself among the number of Christ's disciples, saying: "Master, I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou shalt go."² What more could he say in order to engage our Lord to admit him into the number of His immediate followers? Yet the reply of Jesus is significant, and illustrates the Divine counsel and wisdom which presided over all His judgments: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." We are not told that the Scribe persevered in his offer, and it may be inferred that the poverty which our Lord set before him as the portion

¹ St. Luke viii. 26-39.

² St. Matt. viii. 19.

of those who should become His followers, cooled the ardour of the man and proved his unfitness for the apostleship. This had already been discerned by the wisdom "which reacheth everywhere by reason of its purity,"¹ and hence our Lord's concise but pregnant answer.

To another, whom St. Matthew mentions as already a disciple, His answer was "Follow Me." When the young man asked permission first to go and bury his father, it was not granted, and the invitation was repeated in the form of a command: "Let the dead bury the dead, but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God."² On the supposition of this man being already a disciple he must still have been in a kind of probation, so that the call now received was to a closer and a permanent following of our Lord, in the offices of teaching and preaching in His Name. A more generous and perfect detachment was therefore required of him, such as our Lord demanded in another instance, given by St. Luke as immediately succeeding the one mentioned. There also we apparently have a disciple who offered to become one of our Lord's abiding companions. "I will follow Thee, Lord," he says, "but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house." Our Lord's answer implies rebuke, but He does not, as previously, refuse the permission sought, or expressly command the applicant to remain with Him. His words are, however, pregnant with the truth He wished to impress on all, that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it was necessary for those who were desirous of labouring in its spread to be spiritual-minded and detached from all that could enchain their hearts to this earth. "No

¹ Wisdom vii. 24.

² St. Luke ix. 59, 60.

man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.”¹ Thus did our Divine Lord vary His mode of dealing with those who came to Him, according to the dictates of the wisdom residing within Him, and the discernment which guided all His actions.

We must now turn to consider our Lord in His relations with sinners, and, as we write, our heart grows full and we would fain lay down our pen, and in the silence of prayer contemplate the loveliness of Jesus in this, its most winning form. Besides the sick and infirm upon whom our Lord bestowed His miraculous cures, many of them being, as we may well infer from the Gospel narrative, sinners in a more particular sense than other men, a separate and distinct class of persons stands forth, as though especially chosen by the Holy Spirit to afford an illustration of the mercifulness and tenderness with which the Son of God dealt with souls held captive by sin. Truly chief among these may be named that dear Magdalen, whose passionate grief, whose agonizing love, and whose spirit of abiding reparation, are as precious to our hearts as they are familiar to our contemplation. The Gospel does not tell us where she first saw our Lord, or whether she beheld Him for the first time as she entered into the house of the Pharisee. We might be induced to think that she had previously looked upon His face and heard the tones of His voice, since there seems to have been already awakened in her breast the generous love that was ever after to go on increasing in its intensity. She knew of His presence at a banquet in the house of a certain Pharisee, but she could not bear to wait till He came forth. She felt impelled to

¹ St. Luke ix. 62.

enter and cast herself at His feet, and disclose to Him the love and the sorrow He had poured into her breaking heart. Tears—precious tears—coursed down her cheeks when she stood behind at His feet, and began with those tears to bathe them, and with those long tresses, that as a veil fell around her, to wipe them dry again. More than this, she dared to imprint on His sacred feet her warm yet most chaste kisses, and to anoint them with the precious ointment she had brought. Will He not shrink from the contamination of the sinner's lips? Will He not instinctively withdraw Himself from the touch of her hands? Did He not know what manner of woman this was that touched Him—how great a sinner she had been? Who knew it all so well as He did? Who could tell, as He could do, the number and the heinousness of her sins, and the foulness of their dye? And yet, it is the Pharisee who despises her—who could not abide her presence, much less her contact. Whilst Jesus, Infinite Purity and Sanctity and Truth, looks upon her with the ineffable tenderness of His Sacred Heart, and loves her even in her unworthiness.

We have dwelt, in a former chapter, on the species of parable addressed by our Lord to Simon, whose cynical thoughts He had read, and we need not repeat what we have said. Many like instances shall we have to notice, in all of which our Lord took upon Himself the defence of sinners, at the moment they were the object of scorn to the proud. We can detect a peculiar delicacy in our Lord's treatment of Magdalen, as if He were occupied not only in absolving her from her sins, but also in making known to her the value He set upon her penitential love. The permission He granted to her several acts, and the

parable by which He instructed Simon in her hearing, these also, we can easily believe, were designed for the consolation of her who drank in every word and enshrined them in her sorrowing heart. Finally, when the Pharisees murmured and questioned among themselves on hearing Him pronounce the sinner's pardon, our Lord dismissed her with words of gentleness, infusing confidence and peace into her soul.¹

At another time a woman was brought to Him convicted of a crime which the law of Moses punished by stoning to death. The subtle design of the Scribes and Pharisees who brought her was treated of in a previous chapter, as having been at once read and understood by our Lord, to their signal discomfiture. At present we have but to contemplate briefly Christ's action towards the accused person herself. It would appear from the narrative that they had several times to repeat the question, What punishment, in our Lord's judgment, the woman deserved, before they could obtain from Him any reply. The words are: "When therefore they continued asking Him." Besides other reasons which have been assigned, our Lord's delay was prompted by a merciful consideration both for His questioners and for the accused. It gave them time to enter into themselves, whilst His mysterious act of writing on the ground may have well brought to their minds the denunciation of those whose names are "written in the earth,"² and not in the book of life. This sentence they, because of their secret sins, had good reason to fear for themselves. The woman stood awaiting the condemnation which she knew the Law pronounced upon her. But what did she behold instead? The

¹ St. Luke vii. 36—50.

² Jerem. xvii. 13.

Person before her, beautiful in His calm majesty, stood erect indeed, but in His voice there was no anger, in His words no condemnation of her; on the contrary, after their utterance it was her accusers who one by one shrank silently away. She was left alone with her Judge, and by His mercy she knew Him to be Divine. Gently He asks her where her accusers are—whether there had been found none to condemn her. “No man, Lord,” she replies. Then follow those words of ineffable mercy, sweetness, and compassion which absolved her from her sin and bade her go and sin no more.¹

Beautiful, again, is the gentle artifice by which our Lord drew from the Samaritan woman the acknowledgment of her sinful life. First, He appealed to the natural goodness which, it is probable, finds some place in almost every heart, and which the quick eye of Jesus may have seen to be present with a more than ordinary distinctness in the woman before Him. He asked her for water to slake His thirst. To her expression of astonishment that such a request should be made by a Jew to a woman who was a Samaritan, our Lord replied, in words calculated to awaken her interest and engage her in conversation, and resulting in her entire conversion. Step by step He led her on, bearing sweetly with the imperfect and merely natural motives which, in the earlier part of her discourse, prompted her to desire the water spoken of by Him, but as yet understood by her to mean only the material element that might be drawn from the well. No sooner had He gained full weight with her by the revelation of her sins, and thus caused her to accept Him as “a prophet,” by which act she made tacit avowal of her guilt, than she was impelled to discuss with Him the

¹ St. John viii. 3—11.

religious teaching of the Jews, and the expectation of the Messias, Who when He came was to tell them all things. At length our Lord made Himself fully known to her, and flooding her soul with light, changed her into a believer, a penitent, and an apostle.¹

In the conversion of Zacheus we have another proof how dearly our Lord loved to show Himself as the Good Shepherd of our souls. Zacheus had to bear the stigma of being a publican, but urged by a desire of seeing Jesus as He passed through Jericho, being unable to do so for the crowd, he climbed up into a tree, from whence he could look down upon the procession as it moved along. When the crowd approached, one face of surpassing beauty was raised towards him, and he heard himself called by name. He, Whom Zacheus sought to behold, bade him make haste and come down, for that He desired to abide under his roof. Joyously and "in haste" he received our Lord into his house, Who thus incurred the blame of the people for having gone to be "the guest of a man that was a sinner." Nor did Jesus depart until, in the presence of all there assembled, He declared that salvation had come to that house, "for the Son of Man had come to seek and to save that which was lost."² Very similar in character was our Lord's treatment of the publican Matthew, when He called him to be a future Apostle. Although in the exercise of his office Levi was probably not notorious for unjust extortions, yet, as belonging to a class generally numbered amongst sinners, he was looked down upon by the Pharisees and other strict observers of the Law. Our Lord in passing by, as we may suppose, looked upon him and invited him to become a follower. How ingratiating a sweetness must have lent its per-

¹ St. John iv. 6—30.

² St. Luke xix. 1—7.

suasiveness to those few short words, "Follow Me," to account for their instantaneous effect in changing a sordid man of business into a faithful follower and intimate friend of one Who had not "where to lay His head."

As in the case of Zacheus, our Lord seems to have gone to the house of Matthew, where a banquet was prepared for Him, at which "many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." By this time it had become evident to all that our Lord received graciously those whom the Scribes and Pharisees despised and refused to acknowledge, and thus publicans and sinners felt inspired to approach Him with the fullest confidence. We may picture to ourselves our Lord seated in the house of Matthew, surrounded by these publicans and sinners, with His new convert acting the host to all. They gazed with wonder on the calm, grave countenance of Jesus, as it wore for each one of them an expression of such marvellous gentleness; and while they listened to His words their hearts were all aglow with the new and strange fire breathed forth through the sweetness of His tones. The spirit of the scene was rudely violated by the indignant remonstrances of the Pharisees addressed to the disciples of our Lord: "Why doth your Master eat with publicans and sinners? But Jesus hearing it, said: They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill." Then did He, covering them with shame, refer them to the word of prophecy: "Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."¹ He bade them go and learn the meaning of that which they were so ignorant of, and gave them to understand that in Him

¹ Osee vi. 6.

the prophetic words were fulfilled, "I am not come to call the just, but sinners."¹

Thus we see fulfilled, in our Lord's loving-kindness to sinners, the terms of the prediction, "The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench."² We must not, however, omit other features discernible in His conduct towards them, since our object is to consider the general dealing of our Lord with different classes of souls; the manifestation of His tenderness in particular being reserved for notice elsewhere. If we study attentively the different instances already recorded, we cannot but observe that sweet and winning as was our Lord's method of acting with sinners, and stoutly as He took up their defence when accused or despised, He nevertheless required in them as penance those acts of humiliation which owed their origin to various circumstances. At the same time, through the grace by which He enabled them to accept gladly these occasions, He rendered their acts of humility spontaneous and meritorious. In this way the blessed Magdalen entered voluntarily into the house of the Pharisee, although she knew many would be assembled there, certain to recognize her as the "woman who was in the city a sinner," and to despise her accordingly. In their sight she cast herself at our Lord's feet, thus acknowledging her changed dispositions, and laying herself open to cynical and contemptuous remarks. So too the woman taken in adultery had to pass through a painful ordeal before the absolving words were pronounced over her. Again, the Samaritan was brought face to face with her sin before she had confessed it, while in the humility of her repentance she went into the city and told all whom she

¹ St. Matt. ix. 9—13.

² Isaias xlii. 3.

met of Him Who had revealed to her all things, whatsoever she had done. Zacheus also had to bear the scorn of the little world around Him when, in presence of the publicans assembled at his house, he voluntarily acknowledged that he had incurred the obligation of making restitution to those whom he had wronged. And St. Matthew must brook the sneers of his former fellow-publicans as they beheld him following in the train of the Galilean.

Behind these acts of penance deep and significant teaching is conveyed, which was to be reproduced and developed in the Church when her Divine Head should have passed into the Heavens. Who can fail to see, in our Lord's conduct towards sinners, the merciful yet penitential spirit of the Church, freely pardoning and tenderly loving her weakest children, yet requiring of them humble confession of their sins, supplemented by works of satisfaction? And it is because the Spirit of Jesus lives ever in His Church, and moreover is infused into the hearts of His priests, that souls are being ceaselessly attracted thither, where the Precious Blood flows most freely in absolution, and the Sacred Heart is specially open to cherish and console the sinner. As the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him when He walked on the earth, so is it still; and as in word and work He was ever seeking the lost sheep, so still His Church receiveth sinners and breaks to them the Bread of Life, giving them also to drink of the living Water from "the fountains of the Saviour."¹ In His discourses to the multitudes our Lord threw broadcast His invitations begging the sinner to come to Him, and many such must have mingled with the crowds attracted daily to hear Him.

¹ *Isaias xii. 3.*

We learn from His parables how full His Heart was of the desire to draw sinners to approach Him, and when He beheld many who had come voluntarily to listen to Him, we find His eloquence ever ready in such parables as the Lost Sheep, the Groat, and the Prodigal Son, to impress upon His hearers His tender love for those who were as yet wandering in the ways of sin.¹

Without treading on past ground, wherein we spoke of Jesus as Beautiful in the exercise of His authority, we must direct attention to a particular feature in our Lord's treatment of the rulers of the people and His enemies generally, which illustrates His wisdom and prudence as well as the ardent desire with which He yearned after their conversion. The number of those who attended His footsteps, attracted by His heavenly doctrine and the sight of the miracles which He performed, soon drew upon our Lord the envy and jealousy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and set them on the anxious watch for evidences upon which they might accuse Him. Before, however, such opposition declared itself openly our Lord spoke to them in familiar and confidential terms, making frequent mention of God as their Father in Heaven, and giving them such counsels as would be readily accepted by them, if in simplicity of heart they were really desirous of following Him. Then, as envy and antagonism entered more deeply into the hearts and minds of the scribes and priests till they made themselves heard in the complaints and reproofs uttered against Him, our Lord with Divine charity retired from intercourse with His opponents. He did this that He might give them time for reflection, and

¹ St. Luke xv.

might prevent the irritation naturally engendered by His presence from proving an obstacle to their discovering in Him the Messiah Whom their Prophets had foretold. Nevertheless "His work was before Him," and must be accomplished. Not a single prophecy but must be fulfilled, even in its least detail. Thus He ceased not His labour, although His Divine wisdom led Him to choose times and places for proceeding with it "reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly."¹ But time advanced, and with it the necessity for renewing opportunities of grace even to the obstinate. Our Lord therefore appeared in the towns and villages of Judea, as previously He had done in Galilee, teaching with the same authority, and seeking in no way to shun the observation of the rulers. There was, however, a change in His mode of speaking. Thoughts suggested by the term "Our Father," gave place to the more distinct expression, "My Father." His discourses became more and more definite in their teaching, and by continually asserting His unity with the Father He claimed from all the faith and reverence which were due to the Divinity of His Person.

This deliberate action of our Lord became more pronounced as time passed, whilst, on the other hand, striking miracles were performed by Him with less frequency. St. John, the Beloved Disciple, makes his sorrowful complaint: "And whereas He had done so many miracles before them, they did not believe in Him."² Although, as we learn from the same Evangelist, "many of the chief men did believe, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, that they might not be cast out of the Synagogue,"

¹ Wisdom viii. 1.

² St. John xii. 37.

since all who should adhere to Him were pronounced worthy of excommunication. Yes, He had tried every means of gaining them, and of softening their hard hearts. He had spoken to them directly, and indirectly by parables intended to bring their malice home to them, and strike fear into their minds at the terrible judgments awaiting them, without, however, expressly naming them before the people, because they were their teachers. He had on other occasions publicly denounced them, and put them to open shame. He allowed them time for reflection and repentance, and now at the eleventh hour He invested Himself with the majesty that belonged to Him, and spoke plainly of His Divine Nature. Yet even during this last period of His Life, when time so pressed that He felt the necessity of assuming all the dignity becoming His true authority, there is a touch of inexpressible pathos in the impulsive utterances of yearning love towards that obdurate people which burst forth from His Sacred Heart. Thus, after the severe denunciations which He had pronounced against the Scribes and Pharisees on the occasion of His last appearance in the Temple, His final words were expressive of tender mournfulness at thought of the impending ruin of those who above all others should have received Him, of His chosen people whose fathers had, through the lapse of ages, sighed so longingly for His coming. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but thou wouldst not."¹ Even in our Lord's conversation with Pilate we can detect the same yearning to win over a soul which He

¹ St. Luke xiii. 34.

had created and longed to save. We see it in the earnest and dignified condescension by which He vouchsafed to speak to the Roman Governor concerning His Kingdom, assuring him that every one who was of the truth heard His voice. We see it in the solemn assurance that Pilate could have no power against Jesus unless it were given him from above—words which so evidently impressed him that from thenceforth he only sought to release our Lord.¹

Another fruitful subject for thought in connection with our Lord's treatment of the various classes of persons who approached Him, is the admirable wisdom and charity with which He accommodated Himself to the capacity and dispositions of each one, combined with the condescension and solicitude shown in the trouble to which He put Himself, in order to benefit individual persons as well as multitudes. "Jesus went with them," we read in the Gospel of St. Luke; words which were indeed suggestive and, as it were, figurative of the means employed by Him in order to insinuate His truth, and with it Himself, into the hearts of men.² One of the most beautiful of our Lord's parables, that of the Marriage-supper of the King's son, which so forcibly describes the cruel wound inflicted on His love by men's rejection of His grace, and at the same time the yearning of His Sacred Heart for souls ready to correspond with His invitation to the Divine banquet of union with Him, was specially addressed to one of the guests in the house of the Pharisee, which our Lord had entered to eat bread on a certain Sabbath-day. This man was so charmed by the heavenly wisdom revealing itself in our Lord's

¹ St. John xix. 12.

² St. Luke vii. 6 ; xxiv. 15.

words of instruction, that with an outburst of fervour and admiration he exclaimed: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Then Jesus turned to him full of earnest longing for his complete conversion, and, in the language of parable, set before him how truly He "desired with desire" to bestow on him and upon every one that bread of life; while He also pictured the terrible lot of those who, having been invited, shall fail to correspond.¹

The same loving concern suggested our Lord's protracted discourse with Nicodemus, the ruler who came to Him by night. At the outset Jesus spoke to him of regeneration in Baptism, a new birth which he interpreted in a material sense, and could not understand. Our Lord discoursed with him at some length on the manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and Nicodemus was compelled to admit his inability to comprehend a mystery so far above him. "How can these things be done?" Our Lord replied with grave irony: "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" He further humbled His new disciple by expressing a doubt as to his power to believe in "heavenly things," since he could scarcely believe even those which were earthly. At last, pleased, as we may conjecture, with the good dispositions of Nicodemus, our Lord told him of the descent of the Son of Man from Heaven, Who should be "lifted up," after the manner of the lifting up of the serpent by Moses in the desert. He explained to him how the greatness of the love of God for the world had led Him to give for its salvation His only-begotten Son, and He concluded His conversation with Nicodemus by instructing him as to the

¹ St. Luke xiv. 1-16.

necessity of faith, with many words of warning and exhortation.¹ So inexhaustible was the charity of Jesus for each particular soul, and so ingenious His wisdom in leading men by "right ways," according to each one's temper of mind! In truth it was by the variety of the works He wrought, and the different methods which He adopted in dealing with souls, that the declaration of Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled, "Out of many hearts thoughts shall be revealed;" the proof of which lies in the varied effects produced by His words and actions upon the different classes of persons who heard or witnessed them. That which was true in His mortal life is now continued in the mystical body of His Church, the doctrines and discipline of which some presume to censure, whilst others believe and obey them, to the saving of their souls.

Before treating of our Lord's manner towards those whom He destined to be the Apostles and foundation-stones of His Church, one instance remains to be noticed, inasmuch as it indicates the entire liberty allowed to the will of man in accepting or refusing the gifts and graces offered to Him. A certain young man ran up to Jesus, and kneeling down before Him asked, "Good Master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life?" Our Lord's words seemed to bear no reference to the question put to Him, when He replied: "Why dost thou call Me good? None is good but one, that is God." This appeared to imply the assertion that, if goodness were ascribed to Him in the high and strict sense conveyed by the young man's mode of address, it carried with it faith in the truth of His Divinity. If this faith was present to His mind, then indeed the

¹ St. John iii. 1-15.

young man might call Him "good," seeing that He and the Father were really One. Our Lord next proceeds to give a direct answer to the question, telling the man that since he knew what were the commandments he could examine himself by them, as being the rule of life. The young man's ardour must have received a rather painful check, on hearing our Lord's calm and matter-of-fact response. On his urging further: "Master, all these things I have observed from my youth," our Lord regarded him with tender love and esteem, and sought to draw him on to the following of the counsels of perfection: "One thing is wanting unto thee: Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me." Here there is no command, but a vocation. "If thou wilt," writes St. Matthew. Alas! Jesus had asked of him one thing too much—the sacrifice of his wealth—"for he had great possessions," and so he went away sorrowful. Why did our Lord allow Him to go? This is a question which suggests itself to us. He did so because He forces no man's choice, but leaves to each one the noblest gift with which he is endowed—the freedom of his will. It is useful for us to remember that this circumstance took place in the presence of the Apostles themselves, upon whom it appears to have made a deep impression, as we gather from the words of St. Peter in his reply to the grave and mournful reflections which our Lord addressed to them after the departure of that young man, whose first approach had seemed so full of promise.¹

Throughout, indeed, the whole course of what may be called their novitiate, our Lord with evident design spoke to and influenced His Apostles through the

¹ St. Mark x. 17—30; St. Luke xviii. 18—30; St. Matt. xix. 16—30.

people whom He addressed, arranging incidents and discourses which He made replete with instruction of the utmost importance to them in their career. They witnessed the various methods adopted by our Lord in dealing with classes of men, as well as with individual souls. They marked the tone of authority He assumed towards the proud and arrogant, the gentleness of His words to the afflicted and the sinful. Above all, they could not have failed to appreciate, as in the case just mentioned, His careful abstinence from all coercion of the free-will of those whom He so earnestly invited to follow Him. The special lesson He would draw for them from the lost vocation of the rich young man was the danger of worldly possessions, as regards those called to be His disciples. In accordance therefore with His habit of converting every incident into instruction for His immediate followers, our Lord turned to His Apostles when He spoke those solemn words: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" The disciples appear to have been astonished at their Master's assertion; and He, answering their mute surprise, pronounced still more emphatically than before the extreme danger of their possession, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God." This repeated remark made the disciples "wonder the more," so that, under an impulse of fear, they asked anxiously among themselves: "Who then can be saved?" To this Jesus answered: "All things are possible with God." So salutary a dread was awakened in the Apostles, that they felt all the consolation of being able to remind their Master how they had "left all things and followed Him," which was precisely the condition our Lord had just offered to the rich young

man for his attaining perfection and so ensuring eternal life. Then followed the grand promise addressed primarily to Peter, for it was he who, as usual, spoke in the name of the rest, though it was at the same time addressed to all who should hereafter leave everything for the sake of Jesus, whereby they were to reap the hundred-fold, "now in this time with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting." Our Lord's final words bore a mournful significance, and must have produced a depressing effect upon the hearts of the Apostles, following immediately after the defection just witnessed by them. "Many," said our Lord, "that are first shall be last; and the last, first,"—words which they themselves were to behold too sadly realized in a member of their own little band.¹

To impress this stern lesson more deeply, Jesus went on to the warning contained within the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, as recorded by St. Matthew.² Just after delivering it, we are told in St. Mark's Gospel, "they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them, and they were astonished, and following were afraid." All that had lately happened was producing its effect in their hearts, so that they were in the best of dispositions for any further instruction they might receive. Thus, when they beheld their Master pressing on before them to Jerusalem, where they well knew danger awaited Him, they felt that great changes were approaching for themselves also, a presentiment which was strengthened by our Lord's calling the Twelve apart from the rest of the disciples who accompanied Him, and beginning to speak to them of His Passion, not indeed for the first time, but as being then near at hand. Deeply though

¹ St. Mark x. 24—31.

² St. Matt. xx. 1—16.

they loved their Divine Master, they could not even now understand His meaning, and we find two of His most favoured Apostles making the ambitious demand that they should occupy a seat, one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His Kingdom. Jesus afforded no encouragement to their petition, but proposed to them the chalice of suffering which He Himself was about to drink, as a better and more precious gift than that which they had sought. The ten Apostles, upon hearing the request of James and John, were indignant at their presumption, a fact which gave our Lord occasion to instruct them concerning the spirit of humility that He required should reign amongst them. He told them then, and repeated it again at the Last Supper, that they were not to "lord it" over one another, as they do who seem to rule over the Gentiles. Next, after teaching them that whosoever will be the first among them shall be the servant of all—words which we believe had special reference to Peter who, though first of a long line of Vicars, should bear the lowly title, *servus servorum Dei*—He concluded by placing His own example before them: "For the Son of Man also is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many."¹ The above incidents we have placed here somewhat out of their due order in our general plan, because they followed upon the departure of the rich young man, whose lost vocation led our Lord on to that series of events and instructions which formed a part of His spiritual direction and training to the twelve Apostles.

We are now in a position to appreciate the manner of our Lord's dealing with His chosen ones from the

¹ St. Mark x. 32--45.

commencement of their vocation. When, finding Peter and Andrew and James and John on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus called them to follow Him, He made use of their present employment as a figure of the heavenly work to which He summoned them. "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men."¹ Then did those strong men rise at the bidding of the gentle voice they heard, a new fire was lit up in their souls; and that fire still carries its light unto the ends of the world, even to this day. The disciples we have just named as first called to be future Apostles were, it seems, immediately allowed to witness the brilliant results attending their Master's Mission. They accompanied Him in His journeys throughout Galilee, hearing Him teach in the synagogues and preach "the Gospel of the Kingdom," and seeing Him heal all manner of diseases. His fame penetrated to all parts of Syria, and multitudes of sick, besides lunatics and persons possessed by the devil, were brought to Him and were cured, so that, as we read in the same chapter, the numbers who followed Him continually increased, out of "Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan." Thus had our Lord, in His Divine wisdom, timed the moment for calling His first disciples, previous to His entering on the great missionary work, wherein He knew their faith and zeal would meet with so many opportunities of becoming stronger and more robust. The Sermon on the Mount, which won the hearts of so many of the people, added greatly to the reverence already felt by His disciples towards Him, and this feeling gathered immense force when Jesus, assembling the Twelve around Him, gave them power

¹ St. Matt. iv. 19.

to cast out devils and heal all kinds of diseases and infirmities. At the same time, He distinctly laid before them the principles upon which the new Kingdom was to be founded, together with the rules by which it should be governed. Thus also it was ordinarily in their presence that our Lord claimed to be "Lord of the Sabbath," an act of authority that must have deeply impressed them with the sense of His Divine Mission.

Not to mention the number and variety of miracles which they saw Him perform upon the sick and possessed, they witnessed ample signs of His tender compassion for the people who had followed Him in crowds into the wilderness, working on their behalf, twice over, the stupendous miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, as a symbol of the Blessed Sacrament. On the first of these occasions, it is to be remarked, our Lord bade the Apostles distribute the food to the people—"Give you them to eat;"¹ as though He would prove their inability to work any miracle without Him, according to His words at another time: "Without Me you can do nothing."² It appears to have been during the night following this manifestation of our Lord's power that He appeared to the Apostles walking on the waters. Seeing their terror (because they thought it an apparition), Jesus bade them fear not, for it was He. This prepared the way for a fresh act of direct and figurative teaching, specially addressed to the Chief Apostle and future Head of the Church. Peter, with his wonted impetuosity, exclaimed: "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." Jesus answered: "Come." At the voice of command the Apostle stepped from the boat to walk upon the lake,

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 16.

² St. John xv. 5.

but becoming afraid he began to sink and cried out: "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately stretched forth His hand, rebuking him the while, not because he had called upon Him for aid, but because of the fear and waning confidence which had prompted the appeal. Then, filled once more with admiration, all the Apostles came to their Master, adoring Him and confessing Him to be the Son of God.¹ The circumstance just narrated reminds us in many points of the stilling of the tempest, when our Lord again rebuked them for their little confidence. Their faith, however, in the Divinity of our Lord must have been considerably increased before Peter essayed to walk upon the waters, as we may gather from the different manner in which the Apostles expressed themselves with relation to their Master. Formerly they had asked: "Who is this, think you, that He commandeth both the winds and the sea, and they obey Him?"² Whilst on the second occasion they exclaim: "Indeed Thou art the Son of God."

Our Lord, after Peter's profession of faith in His Divinity, began constantly to allude to His future Passion, that He might prepare His Apostles for the terrible events of which they would be eye-witnesses, as well as for the share which they themselves might expect to bear in His ignominy. It was on one of these occasions, when Jesus had been speaking in detail of His approaching sufferings, that St. Peter, growing freer and more impetuous in the ardour of his love, rebuked his Master with the words: "Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee."³ The Chief of the Apostles was now to receive one of His sternest reproofs. Our Lord applied the term of Satan to him, by which He intimated that He regarded as an adver-

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 33.

² St. Luke viii. 25.

³ St. Matt. xvi. 22.

sary any one who should oppose the eternal designs, or show himself averse to the mystery of the Cross. He told him further that he was a scandal to Him, and bade him go behind Him, that he might learn the duty of simply following in His footsteps, being as yet himself but earthly minded—savouring not the things that are of God. Then He turned to the other disciples who stood around, and inculcated on them the necessity of taking up their cross and following Him, for whosoever should be ashamed of Him, of such a one He would be ashamed when He should come in His majesty to judge the world. The stern rebuke which Peter had received, and the significance of our Lord's act in turning away from him to the others and to the crowd in general, together with the words fraught with apparent reproach to himself—these must have wounded Peter's sensitive heart to the quick. Yet was it the training necessary for the sublime office he was about to fill, and for the cruel passion he was himself years later to endure. His Divine Master, however, would not leave him long without consolation, for in less than eight days he was an eye-witness, along with James and John, of the splendid scene of the Transfiguration; although even that was itself but a prelude to the dark and harrowing scene of the Agony in the Garden.

In St. Matthew's Gospel we find our Lord giving His Apostles a series of instructions containing rules for their conduct in the ministry about to be laid upon them, and examples of the spirit which should animate them. He began by placing before them a little child as the model of humility, assuring them that he who should most resemble that little child would be accounted greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, so

solicitous was Jesus to lay down humility as the basis of the new Kingdom. He next warned them against giving scandal to any, predicting woe to that man by whom the scandal is given; while He admitted that scandals must arise, by way of fortifying them against discouragement when sins occurred which not all their efforts and prayers could wholly avert. Passing on to a theme particularly dear to His Sacred Heart, the joy of recovering the lost sheep, He concluded by exhorting them so to labour that not one should perish, for such is the will of their Father Who is in Heaven. After this our Lord discoursed of the authority of the Church, and imparted to His Apostles the power of binding and loosing, promising at the same time His presence to abide in the midst of them. When St. Peter approached his Divine Master with a question concerning the forgiveness of injuries, our Lord's answer embodied the merciful theology of the Church respecting the remission of sins. "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Then spoke out the love of the Sacred Heart, Whose Spirit was to rest for ever with the Church, and vivify the Sacrament of Penance: "I say not to thee till seven times, but till seventy times seven times." At length this series of instructions concluded with the narration of the unmerciful servant, a story that must have lived in the memory of St. Peter with most blessed fruit, seeing that years afterwards his cheeks were furrowed with the tears of penitential compunction at the remembrance of his own forgiven sin, to guide and strengthen him when he was called as visible Head of the Church to extend the like mercy towards others.¹

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 1—35.

Our Lord was continually forming His Apostles upon that principle of mercy which was to be the leading characteristic of His Church, by making it live continually before their eyes, as well as by verbal exposition of it. They had seen His spirit of gentleness, which ever led Him to be lenient with the erring, and to take the part of the accused. He had even told some of themselves that they knew not of what spirit they were, when, filled with indignation because some Samaritans would not receive Him, they had proposed to call down fire from heaven that it might consume them. Again He made use of the occasion to remind them that the Son of Man came, not to destroy men's souls, but to save them, and that this must be their spirit also.¹ As a true Pastor and wise Teacher, our Lord did not fail to warn His Apostles against imbibing the "leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," the spirit of the world, and when they imagined He was referring to the want of material bread, He humbled them, as He was wont to do, for their want of understanding, and complained that He spoke not of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.²

About this time we find Jesus holding argument with St. Peter respecting the obligation of paying tribute, and advising great caution in the exercise of his judgment. The Apostle had been asked by some if his Master paid the didrachma or tax levied upon every one for the service of the Temple. Peter answered in the affirmative, but he appears to have come to our Lord for further information. Jesus anticipated his inquiry by asking: "What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive

¹ St. Luke ix. 55, 56.

² St. Matt. xvi. 5—12.

tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? "Of strangers," was the reply. "Jesus said to him: Then the children are free." He however told Simon to pay the tribute demanded, "for Me and for thee, that we may not scandalize them."¹ Thus did our Lord give to Peter an admirable example of humility, as well as of discretion and prudence. He likewise solemnly warned them against vain-glory, which might possibly arise from the gifts and powers He had bestowed upon them, for when they returned full of joy that the spirits were subject to them, and eagerly related to Him the wonderful works they had wrought in His Name, He gravely reminded them that Satan once like lightning fell from heaven, and bade them not rejoice in the power they had from Him, but rather that their "names were written in Heaven."²

We need not dwell here on our Lord's attitude towards His Apostles and more immediate disciples when nearing the close of His life. They remarked Him every day growing more tenderly familiar with each one, opening out His mind to them with greater confidence than ever, unfolding to them all the secrets of His loving Heart. We have but to read the Gospel narrative to see clearly the intimate friendship to which the Apostles were admitted; and whilst He spoke to them Heart to heart, and bestowed on them special marks of His tender love, He ceased not, until the very end, to form them silently by His own example till they had acquired the spirit of Apostles, whose mission it was to build up the Church on the principles their Divine Master had laid down. We have paused to consider at length the various dealings of our Blessed Lord with souls, because we discover therein His

¹ St. Matt. xvii. 23—26.

² St. Luke x. 17—20.

ineffable beauty under so many different aspects. All the marvellous effects of the Hypostatic Union, all the immense treasures of His sacred Soul, are placed at the disposal of His creatures, and rendered subservient to their interests and consolation.

Thus was it in His mortal life, during which He spent and exhausted Himself to make known to us the character of the great God "Who loveth souls." Thus it is that He still works by divers operations of grace in our hearts, as well as by the exterior dispensations of His providence, which like a hand are touching chords within our souls, and making them vibrate with sounds harmonizing more or less perfectly with His will, in proportion to the right use we make of the freedom of our own.

CHAPTER X.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS SENSITIVENESS.

I opened the bolt of my door to my Beloved ; but He had turned aside, and was gone. . . . I called, and He did not answer me (Cant. v. 6).

Our next subject for consideration is one of extreme delicacy, demanding utmost reverence and caution in those who approach it, for as much as on the one hand it unfolds to us points of exceeding loveliness in the interior Soul of Jesus, on the other it exposes us to the danger of conceiving unreal and purely human views regarding Him.

We must here, as elsewhere, keep constantly before us the fact that the Divine attributes directed the actions of God Incarnate, that in Him were manifested the character of God His Father, and the effects of that Father's love for men. Now, if we listen to the inspired language of the Prophets, we shall learn from them that the love of the Creator for His creatures is not only everlasting and infinite, but, moreover, that there is in it a depth and tenderness of sympathetic feeling, a sensitiveness, which in the human Heart of the Man-God became a source of keenest suffering. It must further be remembered that our Lord, being clothed with our human nature, shared in our human susceptibilities, and thus was rendered capable of participating in our joys, griefs, fears, and other emotions,

by which means He acquired that experimental knowledge to which allusion was made in earlier chapters. By the sensitiveness which inevitably accompanies intense love, in elevated natures at least, and still more in one that is perfect, our Lord revealed all the delicacy of God's treatment of His rational creatures, doing violence to His love, as it were, in order to abide by His own law of leaving their will free and unconstrained.

As there is a jealousy which flows from love, and another which originates in envy, so is it with sensitiveness, which is either the result of an acutely delicate organization rendered still more delicate by intense love, or else the outcome of pride and self-esteem when it displays itself in what is familiarly known as touchiness, a quality so fatal in its effects to charity and peace. Jealousy in the former of these senses is a Divine attribute: "The Lord His name is jealous, He is a jealous God."¹ So, in like manner, the sensitiveness of Jesus is in Him the reflection of a Divine perfection, the concomitant of love in a perfect nature. In a less perfect nature it is attended with irregularities which tarnish its beauty, but the susceptibilities of our Lord, being subordinate to His will in every case, maintained that beautiful harmony and order which became the perfection of His all-holy Soul. We should understand this much better were we attentively to consider the characteristics of God's love as revealed to us by His inspired Saints of the Old Law. We there hear Him pleading with souls, even in language which seems to breathe the passionate yearning of a human heart, rather than the just complaint of an outraged God. But when, after long waiting, His tender appeals

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 14.

and His anger alike are unheeded, He seems to withdraw His claims, and remaining "silent in His love" leaves His rebellious children, since they seem bent on rejecting Him, to the free exercise of that will the spontaneous correspondence of which to His love is an essential part of His economy in dealing with souls.¹ All this was reproduced before the eyes of men in the Incarnate Son, in Whom could be seen the action of the Divine love and of the most perfect human love in one and the same Person. No heart ever felt the cruel pang of unkindness or rejection so keenly as did the Heart of Jesus, none was, or ever could be, so painfully sensitive to ingratitude and wrong. We can expect no other result from the delicacy and perfection of His organization. It was said concerning Him of old: "A body Thou hast fitted to Me."² It might also be said that a soul was fitted to Him, one capable of extraordinary clearness of perception and consequent intensity of suffering, and endowed also with a capacity for loving which only the Soul of a Man-God could possess.

That it must have been so we learn from all which our faith tells us of the perfection of the Sacred Humanity. But inasmuch as the life of the Heart of Jesus is hidden in the bosom of the Father, there are deep calm expanses of beauty within that fathomless ocean, which eternity only may reveal to our entranced vision. Nevertheless, many words and actions of our Lord are recorded in the Gospels, opening out to our eye some glimpses of the inner life led amongst men by a Soul so perfectly organized, a Heart so delicate in the impulses of Its love. The little comparatively that we do see is sufficient to indicate the keen anguish which

¹ Sophonias iii. 17.

² Hebrews x. 5.

the Sacred Heart silently endured from the gross and inconsiderate harshness of those who rejected, or were indifferent to Its love. A very touching instance occurs in the Gospel of St. Luke, who relates the conversion of the blessed Magdalen, and plainly sets forth, not only our Lord's exquisite appreciation of the penitent's love, but also His pained consciousness of the cold and loveless neglect shown by Simon at whose table He was seated. Our Lord had been in the house for some time, as we may gather from the fact of the banquet having already taken place. Magdalen, too, had anointed our Lord's feet, and Jesus had by parable corrected the error of judgment betrayed by His host, before He disclosed how keenly He felt the cold reception He had met with. He might, perhaps, have left the house without making any revelation of His feeling, had not Magdalen's work of love called for some remark. Then came that touching disclosure, clothed in language of such surpassing beauty as to have since awakened countless hearts to a perception of the depths of divinely human love hidden in the Soul of Him Who spoke: "I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet." A complete revelation of the character of Jesus, and of the exceeding sensitiveness of His Sacred Heart, shines forth through those words—words which He may have as justly addressed for the rebuke of too many amongst ourselves and others in the ages that have followed.¹ We can

¹ St. Luke vii. 36—47.

discern traces of a like sensitive fear of laying constraint on the free choice of those who approached Him, or of forcing any whom He approached to receive Him, when we recall the silent self-restraint with which He obeyed the entreaty of the people of the Gerasens, that He would depart from their coasts. He had not come hither for the sake of him alone out of whom He had driven the evil spirit, but that He might bring blessings for all who would receive them. They, however, valued their temporal possessions far more than the "better gifts" which He was anxious to bestow. "And therefore going up into the ship, He returned back again."¹ What an air of sad disappointment and lost opportunities of blessing hangs about the simple reading of these brief yet truly suggestive words, telling all the depression of this most loving Heart at being obliged to withdraw from those who would have none of Its love, and desired not even Its presence amongst them.

It was ever thus when our Lord was constrained to retire from cities and places, or from souls wherein He had designed to pour His benefits. He must have experienced the same pang when He felt Himself obliged to change His manner of speaking to the people, in consequence of the checks received from the jealousy of the rulers and the cavils of the Pharisees, as they mingled with the multitudes who listened to His teaching. How keen, too, must have been His anguish when, in the humiliation of His Passion, He beheld many of those who had for a time professed themselves His followers, and who had perhaps given promise of becoming true believers and disciples, now siding with His enemies and taking part in their formal

¹ St. Luke viii. 37.

rejection of Him. When Pilate led Him forth clothed in His robe of mockery and wearing the Crown of Thorns, and then presented Him before the people assembled in the court beneath, Jesus must have recognized many among the upturned faces in that motley crowd, and His poor Heart thrilled with a sad emotion at the sight of innumerable recipients of His favours now become the tools of their rulers' spitefulness in their denial of Him, if not through malice, at least through the weakest cowardice and most craven fear, no less fatal in its results. Are not the same influences at work in this our own day, to the sacrifice of the true cause of God?

In our Lord's sayings and parables, He gave frequent expression to the wounds inflicted on His love by the coldness or indifference of those for whose sakes He had come on earth. Among His parables we may quote those of the Husbandmen and the different Talents. In the former, after describing the letting out of the vineyard and the maltreatment inflicted by the husbandmen on each servant sent to receive the fruit thereof, our Lord goes on to narrate how the lord of the vineyard resolved at last to send his own beloved son, in the full assurance that at least they would reverence him.¹ Each of the three Evangelists who record this parable make touching mention of the firm conviction of the lord of the vineyard that these husbandmen could not but make an exception in behalf of one so inexpressibly dear to him as his son. Then follows the story, so sadly fulfilled in our Lord's own Person, of the rejection of the son and his inhuman murder.

The Parable of the Talents illustrates more dis-

¹ St. Luke xx. 13.

tinctly the sensitiveness of Jesus, inasmuch as it touches upon a point easy to be understood and appreciated by those who are gifted with the fine quality of true delicacy of feeling. Here we have a nobleman who, after giving talents to each of his servants wherewith to trade until his return, went into a far country. In the meantime his citizens began to hate him, and "sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." The nobleman returned, and as regards those servants who had conscientiously traded with the money entrusted to them, he was well content. But one came to his lord with a cruel and unjust reproach, as an excuse for his negligence in the use of the pound that had been given him: "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and thou reapest that which thou didst not sow." Then we hear the agonized reply of a heart wounded to the quick, the cry of a love outraged in its most sensitive point. The very intensity of its pain renders its language now all severity, where before it had been all tenderness: "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." The unkind accusation is repeated precisely as the servant had just uttered it, telling how deeply and painfully it had penetrated the tender heart, at which it was aimed. "Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow. Why, then, didst thou not give my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have exacted it with usury?" Thereupon follow the condemnation for the neglect of the pound and the sentence of punishment on those who would "not have this man to reign over them." Throughout the parable we can discern that

it is, not so much neglect of the trust that had been committed to him which caused the most keenly felt pain, as the imputation of unjust severity, and the deliberate refusal to have him to reign over them. If the accusation of unkindness is one of such extreme bitterness to the heart of a sensitive man, who has but human love wherewith to feel the desire of benefiting others and the pain of being rejected by them, how easily may we not judge of the wound which so unjust an imputation must send deep into the divinely sensitive Heart of Jesus, accentuated by the intensity of Its love. It is this comparison that Jesus would fain bring home to the mind of His hearers, as well as forewarn them of the events so near at hand.¹

As example of an event giving still clearer evidence of our Lord's pain at meeting with neglect or unkindness we may take what happened during the supper at Bethania, when His ear was assailed by the indelicate accusation of waste brought forward by Judas, and, as we are sadly astonished to read, taken up by some other of the Apostles on the occasion of the blessed Magdalen's anointing our Lord's feet and pouring on His head the precious ointment. Harsh and cruel were their words! Could anything have been too valuable to lavish upon their Divine Master? Not only this, but there follows a show of indignation on the part of some of the Apostles who joined the future traitor in the complaint: "This ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her." Jesus heard the offensive reproach, and once more took up Magdalen's defence, testifying His gratitude for her work of love, and declaring that, wherever the

¹ St. Luke xix. 12-27.

Gospel should be preached, this deed should be recorded to her praise. Finally, He adds a warning for the ears of the Apostles themselves, which must have touched their hearts with bitterest sorrow, and filled each one with remorse, save only Judas, who from that hour sought to betray Him. "The poor you have always with you," said Jesus, "but Me you have not always." It was a sad necessity for our Lord to be obliged thus to plead in His own cause, but His words formed another link in the chain which He was weaving round the hearts of His Apostles, and they gathered fresh meaning from His allusion immediately afterwards to the mystery of His burial. The circumstances under which they were uttered must have come back to the memory of the Apostles with peculiar force, and must have greatly intensified the love which filled their hearts.¹

Too soon our Lord was to drink to the very dregs the bitterness of that chalice of which He has complained in these latter days to His faithful spouse, Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, when revealing to her the sorrows of His Sacred Heart, the chief bitterness of which, as He Himself declared, lay in the coldness and infidelity of His chosen ones. This chalice was presented to Him at the very outset of His Passion, when His Soul was bowed down beneath the grief and fear and weariness that were permitted to invade it. He had made His three most favoured Apostles the sharers of His confidence, confessing to them that His Soul was sorrowful even unto death. They had indeed already heard sufficient from His lips to have kept them wakeful, they had been admitted to the Heavenly Banquet which He had just insti-

¹ St. Mark xiv. 3—9.

tuted, with the sweet memory of which their hearts and minds should have been refreshed. Yet when, in His humility perhaps, He came to them seeking some consolation in His anguish, He found them asleep, unmindful alike of His entreaty that they should watch with Him, and of the events they had witnessed that night, as well as those which He had forewarned them were about to follow. He reveals His acute sense of their indifference by the pained words which He allowed to fall from His lips before retiring again to pray. "What! could you not watch one hour with Me?" When, a little later, He approached them again, He was doomed to experience a second disappointment; and even on His coming a third time, still were they found oppressed with sleep. What a touch of sadness marks the gentle satire in which He bids them sleep on now and take their rest, because the hour of His betrayal was at hand; as though He would intimate that the opportunity for watching with Him had been irremediably lost. In proof of this, He calls upon them to arise at once and go forth with Him; such promptitude of action being the only reparation left, by which to make up for past neglect in rendering the favour He had asked of them.¹

The prominence in the Scripture narrative of the act whereby our Lord was betrayed by His own Apostle and the manifest cruelty of its treachery speak for themselves, without any comment of ours. There was, however, an especial detail in the manner of its execution which may escape the notice of some, and yet must have sent a pang, all its own, into the most tenderly sensitive Heart of our Blessed Lord. It is St. Luke who records the gentle words by which Jesus

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 37-46.

discloses the wound which His love had received, when His faithless Apostle approached Him with the outward mark of pretended friendship: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"¹ A nature less delicately sensitive might not have been so deeply wounded by the particular form in which an injury was inflicted on it. But with Jesus the very perfection of His organization, as well as the quick sympathies of His love rendered Him exquisitely susceptible to each aggravating circumstance of unkindness. That His enemies should seek to destroy Him, that even those who, without being open opponents, had at least never ranked themselves among His more immediate disciples, that such should now hold themselves aloof, might have been expected. But when those whom He had especially selected from among all others to share His most intimate friendship, when they now forsook Him in His extremest need, when His own disciples could find it in their hearts to shrink with craven spirit from His side, in His hour of humiliation, this indeed added to the poignancy of the other wounds of His Sacred Heart the most envenomed wound of all. Yet do we not read that at this moment "the disciples all leaving Him, fled"?² Long before had our Lord in prophecy made known how bitter an aggravation to His sorrows would be the desertion of those "in whom He trusted."³ "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it, and if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hidden Myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, My guide and My familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with Me."⁴ From

¹ St. Luke xxii. 48.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 36.

³ Psalm xl. 10.

⁴ Psalm liv. 13—15.

these words we learn that great things spoken against Him by those who hate Him, and the revilings of an enemy are a far less outrage upon His love than are lighter injuries, when coming from those whom He had admitted to His intimacy; these latter being the wounds He receives "in the house of them who loved Him."¹ Throughout the whole of His Passion, this cause of the keenest suffering to Him pressed upon His Heart, adding to the extreme greatness of His sorrow an intensity that He Himself alone could appreciate.

His open enemies even, the rulers and the priests and the scribes, belonged to the chosen race, and thus their obstinate rejection of our Lord inflicted a distinct wound upon His Heart. We have proof of this in the language employed by Him before His final departure from the Temple, when His indignant reproaches against the Pharisees and Scribes sounded like the cry of an overtaxed love, strained beyond all endurance by its rejection. Whilst His silent leave-taking of so hardened and stiff-necked a generation seemed to take up the echo of that cry of an offended God once heard in the ages before, when, on beholding His people determined to depart from Him, He exclaimed in His wrath: "Ephraim is a partner with idols; let him alone"²—terrible words, which only the anger that springs from a love ruthlessly and obstinately set at naught could have the energy to pronounce! Thus it was that either by word or by silence, by teaching in parables, or by the defence of those who had bestowed on Him marks of love, our Lord disclosed to us a delicacy of sympathy endearing Him to the souls specially admitted to His intimacy. These are by grace sufficiently refined, and by the touch of the spirit

¹ Zach. xiii. 6.² Osee iv. 7.

of love sufficiently purified, to perceive and taste all the attractiveness and beauty of this feature in the divinely human character of the Incarnate Son of God.

Even in His risen life, although His state of impassibility rendered Him superior to impressions of pain either in the faculties of His Soul or in the senses of His Body, we nevertheless may discern traces of the sensitiveness we have remarked; just as in His Sacred Body He bore the print of the wounds which He had received during the days of His mortal life. The gentle but marked reproach which He addressed to St. Thomas on account of his unbelief stands out in evidence of the characteristic referred to. It is an occasion in which, had our Lord been still capable of suffering, His Heart would have been smitten with sorrow. Nay, even all-glorified as He is at the right hand of the Father, His human Heart, flooded with the fulness of His Divinity, is intensely appreciative of the least testimony of love and devotedness on our parts, and equally alive to the slightest indication of coldness and neglect. Still is His Heart wounded, to use the mystical language of the Canticles, "by one of the eyes of the spouse, and with one hair of her neck";¹ seeing that He is still moved by the least turning of the faithful heart, either to Him or away from Him, by the delicate and spontaneous indications of its love, by the kiss when He enters in, and the precious ointment and the tears; as on the other hand, by the removal or absence of these marks, particularly from those souls in whom He confidently looked for them.

It was declared of old that the love of God is everlasting, and we have seen the length and breadth, and

¹ Cant. iv. 9.

height and depth of that love manifested "in His Word. But if it is eternal, it is also from its very intensity, delicate, sensitive, and pure; and it behoves us to be prompt in arising to open to Him when He knocks, lest, being wounded in His love by our tardiness and indifference, when at length we draw aside the bolt, He shall have "turned aside and is gone;" lest then "seeking Him, we find Him not;" lest calling Him back, "He does not answer us."¹ Such things have been from the beginning, even until now.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS ZEAL.

The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee have fallen upon Me (Psalm lxxviii. 10).

THESE words seem to reveal to us the characteristics of the zeal which consumed the Sacred Heart of Jesus, inasmuch as they disclose its nature. Zeal in men is a passion which too often leads them into extravagant excesses, because it does not act under the control of reason, nor subject itself to the influence of the Spirit of God. But it was not thus with our Lord. Zeal was in Him an affection preserving full harmony with the perfect order which reigned in His Soul, its one motive being a Divine thirst for His Father's glory and through that for the salvation of man.

Although the zeal of our Lord had but one source, namely, His love for His Father, to which all the words and actions of His mortal life were referred, yet we

¹ Cant. v. 6.

may consider it under two distinct branches of its operation, one consisting in the vindication of His Father's honour before the world, and the other in its manifestation towards men. Upon the first of these we need not dwell long, the subject having been partially treated in the chapter on the Love of Jesus for His Father, and also when we considered the exercise of His authority, and the faith which He required in the truth of His own Divinity, and in the truth of His doctrine as being the teaching of the Father also. It will be sufficient to remind ourselves that wherever we find our Lord insisting on His unity of nature and operation with the Father, on the authority of His words as having been taught Him by the Father, on the Father's abiding presence in Him, and the like, He ever seeks, not His own glory, but the glory of Him Who sent Him. He dwells upon this fact for a two-fold reason—first because upon its recognition depended His reception by the people as the promised Messiah—and secondly because He desired that in rendering honour to Him they should not render it to Him as Man, but as the Man-God, as God Himself Who “alone is good.”¹ It was with this object that He continually asserted His Godhead, and frequently assumed to Himself the name by which God had declared Himself to Moses, and by which He commanded him to name Him to the people: “I am Who am.”² So also our Lord in speaking to the Jews declared, “When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am.”³ Mark again those words: “Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am.”⁴ And once more, in His conversation with the Samaritan

¹ St. Mark x. 13.

² Exodus iii. 14.

³ St. John viii. 28.

⁴ St. John viii. 58.

woman: "I am, Who am speaking with thee."¹ On another occasion He told the Jews plainly, when they asked Him Who He was, that His name was "the Beginning, Who also speak unto you."²

The Gospel of St. John abounds with passages in which the doctrine of our Lord's Eternal Godhead is declared by His own sacred lips, and yet did He return again and again to the same theme that spoke forth the burning desire of His Heart: "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. I seek not My own glory."³ Whilst He condemned the Jews for seeking their glory from men, He assigned that as the cause why they were unable to believe in Him: "How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek?"⁴ A tangible proof of our Lord's practical zeal for His Father's glory is found in the cleansing of the Temple, an event which occurred twice during His three years' Ministry—once almost at the outset, and the second time towards its close. In both instances our Lord made a scourge of little cords wherewith He drove out them that sold oxen and sheep, overturning the tables of the money-changers, and pouring out on the ground the coin collected upon them.⁵ These are the most striking manifestations of His zeal recorded in the Gospels, and in them we cannot fail to recognize that infinite wisdom which directed and tempered His whole action, clothing it with a character of Divine beauty. In regard to those who sold doves, and whose merchandise offered less profanation to the house of God, whilst their poverty may have excited His compassion, our Lord contented Himself with the command: "Take

¹ St. John iv. 26.

² St. John viii. 25.

³ St. John viii. 54, 50.

⁴ St. John v. 44.

⁵ St. John ii. 14, 15.

these things hence!" At the same time He added a simple remonstrance not to make the house of His Father a house of traffic, and it was on hearing these words that His disciples remembered how it was written of Him: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up."¹ Far stronger was the reproof addressed by our Lord to the irreverent invaders of the holy place on the second cleansing of the Temple, when He applied to them the words of the Prophets Isaias and Jeremias: "My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations. But you have made it a den of thieves." In quoting this passage, our Lord brought once more to their remembrance the name so full of mystery, by which God had declared Himself to Moses, for immediately after it we find written: "I, I am: I have seen it, saith the Lord."² Thus did Jesus assert before the people that the motive of His zeal was the vindication of the glory of Him Who sent Him, and with Whom He was One.

Let us now turn to that other manifestation of the intensity of the Divine zeal, which we may call the second flame proceeding from the fire that consumed the Sacred Heart of our Lord—His zeal, that is, for souls, as we find it disclosing itself in His words, in His parables, and in those long and wearying journeys which were so constantly recurring during His mortal life. Not a single opportunity escaped Him of making known to those around Him the truths of the Kingdom, and of urging them to seek after the treasures contained therein, and by it bestowed upon them. Yet so sweetly and winningly did He conduct Himself towards all as to convince each one that His zeal was the zeal of God, and not of Man. Our Lord took advantage of

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 10.

² Jerem. vii. 11.

the presence of great multitudes round about Him, in addition to His disciples, that He might satisfy the ardent longing of His Heart to unfold to them the object of His Mission, and convince them of the intensity of His desire to see it accomplished: "I am come to cast fire upon the earth," He cried, "and what will I but that it be kindled. And I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."¹ These words told of the ardour with which He yearned to light up in the hearts of all that fire of the love of God which He had come to cast over the whole earth, and to pass through that baptism of blood whereby He was to redeem our souls. As we read these words again and again we know well that He Who spoke them meant them in their very deepest, truest sense; and yet how little do we feel our hearts inflamed by them, how poor is the conception of our Lord's burning zeal for souls which they convey to us. Were we to hear them uttered in our ears by the living voice of some great preacher, who is after all but a messenger, and an imperfect messenger, of Jesus Christ, possessing nothing of that Divine beauty which rendered them so attractive when coming from His lips, we should feel ourselves simply enraptured at the glowing zeal displayed by such a man, and we should probably eulogize him as a saint. So much more powerfully are we swayed by the spoken word that leaps forth from the lips of one before us, and thrills alike upon the ear and heart.

It was in the presence of His enemies that Jesus disclosed the love of His Heart, and testified His longing to draw to Him the sheep far away who were not of that flock: "And other sheep I have who are

¹ St. Luke xii. 49, 50.

not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.”¹ Here our Lord once more reveals to us the wide-stretching zeal wherein His Heart embraced all the children of men, esteeming every one, both Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female, to be all united together in His love. He gives also to succeeding generations a clear warning to fly that narrow calculating zeal—if indeed the mere dictates of nature deserve the name—which restricts not its efforts alone, but its interest also, to the limited circle of personal friends, kindred, or native land, and which in the spirit of the Pharisee cloaks its selfishness under the pretence of religion. Unlike this, the zeal of Jesus was far-seeing and full of compassion for the multitudes spread abroad, like sheep without a shepherd, over the whole surface of the earth, for each one of whom He would as lovingly shed His Blood as for the “chosen people” to whom He belonged by birth. It was zeal for souls that caused Him to mourn over the destruction of Jerusalem, and how tender it was in its character His tears bear witness. Jerusalem was the Holy Place, the Chosen City, the Holy Mountain. There stood the Temple erect in all its magnificence, the Sanctuary where the God of Israel had been worshipped, and wherein the promises of a coming Messiah had been read, arousing such strong desires in the breasts of those who listened to them that He might soon come Who should fulfil the prophecy and establish “the Kingdom.” He had in truth come, but they had rejected Him; He had placed Himself in their midst, yet were their eyes blinded by the pride that would not recognize nor believe in Him. They had filled up

¹ St. John x. 16.

the measure of their own reprobation, and the terrible consequences were fast approaching. The Holy City was to be encompassed with an army, and the heathen general was to enter in and plant there his impious ensign, and the Temple itself would ere long be desecrated, and in the end destroyed. In all this "abomination of desolation" our Lord beheld the majesty of His Father outraged, the rejection of Him by His own people punished, and the eternal loss of countless souls terribly sealed: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts," most truthfully exclaimed the Prophet Elias.¹ But his words were infinitely truer of our Blessed Lord, Whose Divine zeal was to Him an exceeding sharp instrument of torture. Would that our hearts were so conformed to His, so inflamed with the love of God and zeal for His honour, as to enable us to feel His wrongs and each slightest injury done to His interests, with an acuteness which only the zeal of love can produce. Yet men can hear unmoved of the occupation in this our day of the Holy City, the centre of Catholic unity, the dwelling-place of Peter, the Vicar of Christ. They can read of the destruction of God's sanctuary by infidel hordes, and of the insults offered to His Church and her visible Head; they can learn all this without a pang of sorrow, without breathing a prayer for the shortening of the evil days, seeing that their zeal finds therein less motive to work upon than if it were a case of saving from destruction some institution of purely national interest, within the limits of their own country. Even in the Transfiguration—that single instance in His life when the veils of His humiliation were partially uplifted, when we might expect Him to have laid aside

¹ 3 Kings xix. 14.

all reference to His abasements, even then His zeal led Him to speak of "His decease," or, to give fuller expression to the words, His passing forth, "that He should accomplish in Jerusalem."¹ His Death was, in truth, the complement and climax of His zeal; and therefore in this mystery, as on every other occasion, He must speak of it, He must give vent to that superabundance of Divine love which filled and overflowed His Heart.

Our Lord, moreover, instilled into the hearts of His disciples the spirit of true zeal, teaching them to increase and exercise it by prayer, in case other means should fail. Thus when He sent them forth upon their mission, beholding the vast harvest of souls to be gathered in, and the fewness of the labourers for the work, He bid them pray to the Lord of the harvest that He might send more labourers into the vineyard, and warned them that they were going forth like lambs among the wolves, as though He would add fuel to their zeal by setting openly before them the dangers which surrounded both themselves and the souls committed to their trust. The same lesson is contained in His instructions upon prayer, wherein He gave to His disciples the order which Divine charity required to be observed. Thus forgetting themselves and every selfish interest, however spiritual in character, they must, in the first place, desire the sanctification of the Father's name, the coming of His Kingdom, and the perfect accomplishment of His holy will by men on earth, even as it is accomplished in Heaven by the blessed. This order we find He Himself observed to the very end, since, before giving utterance to any expression of His own great anguish as He hung upon the Cross, His

¹ St. Luke ix. 31.

first thought was of others, His first care for their salvation and sanctification. Hence we hear Him first pleading with His Father for the pardon of His enemies, next promising Paradise to the penitent thief, and finally placing His Blessed Mother under the care of the Beloved Disciple. After this He gave vent to that earnest cry which told of His parching thirst, and sounded more like the agonized expression of an insatiable zeal than a complaint of the material thirst, which was undoubtedly consuming Him. On the other hand, much as our Lord desired to fill the hearts of His disciples with the true spirit of zeal for God's honour and for the salvation of souls, He nevertheless did rebuke both them and others whenever they exercised it beyond due measure, or from merely natural motives. Thus He sternly reprov'd two of His disciples on their proposing to call down fire from heaven in punishment of the Samaritans for refusing to receive Him, "because His face was of one going to Jerusalem." Turning He rebuked them, saying: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save."¹ A most needful lesson this for those who were being trained to repeat in themselves the spirit of their Master, and thus draw souls to His knowledge and love. Again, when the ten Apostles were indignant at the request of James and John to be raised to places of honour in the Kingdom of their Master, the manner of our Lord's answer showed His disapproval of a zeal that was not according to God, but proceeded rather from feelings of irritation and jealousy. On this, as on the preceding occasions, He cautions those in authority against esteeming too highly the exaggerated zeal of some

¹ St. Luke ix. 55, 56.

inferiors in their behalf, who may easily be actuated by even lower motives than those of an irregular zeal.

We have traced the beauty which marked the zeal of Jesus in its all-wise prudence, in the sublimity of its motive, in the intensity of its desire, in the wide extent of its embrace; all these proving it to be Divine. Another feature in its character still remains to be considered, springing from those gifts of counsel and wisdom which directed every word and work of our Lord, and manifested the presence of the Holy Spirit. St. Luke narrates how one of the multitude came to our Lord begging Him to act as arbiter between himself and his brother respecting the division of an inheritance. This involving only a question of temporal matters, our Lord in His admirable prudence declined to interfere, wisely remarking: "Man, who hath appointed Me judge or divider over you?" He, however, took occasion, in His zeal for souls, to add a warning against covetousness, and showed by a similitude the folly of heaping up riches from which death may at any moment snatch their owner. Then, in order to take advantage of so valuable an opportunity, He preached to His disciples, in the presence, as we may imagine, of the man who had first asked Him, a sermon on the complete confidence with which they should rely on their Father in Heaven for the supply of all their necessities, exhorting them to seek before all things His Kingdom and its justice, and assuring them that nothing should then be wanting to them. His eye had discerned the covetousness which prompted this request, for there was no evidence of poverty or distress as its motive, and so He did not feel called upon to render the assistance asked. Besides, the appeal to decide as judge in such a case had no con-

nection with His Divine Mission upon earth, and therefore His refusal to interfere bore striking testimony to that heavenly wisdom of a zeal which meddles not in things that have no reference to the glory of God or the interests of souls. This care to avoid meddling with affairs beyond the province entrusted to us, not only distinguishes between true zeal and its counterfeit, but bears also the mark of true sanctity. And although doubtless there are persons whose natural character, or some other cause, prevents their interference as a rule with matters that do not concern them, yet it may be said of those who are guided by the Spirit of God that sound principle preserves them from ever being found at fault in this respect.

There is, perhaps, no point on which men more easily delude themselves than the zeal with which they imagine that they are animated for the glory of God; and truly wonderful is the variety of form which this self-complacent hallucination can assume. An impetuosity in the formation of ideas and precipitancy in carrying them out, which are common at times to every one of us, favour the deceit; and we may observe men otherwise phlegmatic and only too indifferent, where ardour would have been an advantage, seized upon with a sudden energy of zeal in the pursuit of some favourite object, though it be one thoroughly of the earth, and sought for no spiritual motive. The absence of the spirit of counsel, for which they have never prayed, leads men to mistake natural vehemence for well-directed zeal, and thus, even when the object of their desire is good, their whole action is vitiated, or at least deteriorated, because the mere natural impulses of the individual are its guiding spirit, in place of the true Spirit of God. Again, zeal unchastened by the

gift of wisdom is unlovely in its features, and will never attain its end ; whereas persons whose souls are perfected by the gifts of the Spirit, know with unfailing discernment when to exercise their zeal externally, and when to restrain it within their own breasts, there to pursue its object lovingly, silently, and prayerfully. Such as these give proof that they "have the mind of Christ."¹ No one ever "desired with desire" equal to our Blessed Lord.² No one was ever "straitened" like as He was, for the accomplishment of a work which should repair God's outraged glory, and save lost man. No heart has ever been devoured with a zeal comparable to His, obliging the Prophet to confess he could not find language sufficiently emphatic wherein to express it, short of saying that by zeal the Son of Man "was eaten up."³ And yet, governed by an all-Divine wisdom, presided over by the voice of that heavenly counsel which resided in all its perfection within His Soul, "clothed upon" with all the attributes with which God has from the beginning manifested His zeal for His own glory and man's salvation, and steeped in the divinely human love of the Heart of a God-Saviour, the zeal of Jesus qualified its intensity with prudence, put forth its strength with gentleness, and filled with a sense of its grace and beauty every heart without exception which came really within its influence.

We have in the present chapter paused to make some observations which, in a work disclaiming all pretension to the character of a moral treatise, may seem to have been out of place. Those which appear less to the point, or perhaps too subjective, may yet help to discover to us imperfections frequently discernible in the zeal manifested by others or by ourselves—

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 16. ² St. Luke xxii. 15. ³ Psalm lxxviii. 10.

imperfections which mar its lustre, even if they do not entirely change its form and character. Or, to take another point, we may be assisted by what has been said to understand more clearly, and appreciate more worthily, the perfection and beauty of that zeal which consumed the Heart of Jesus, and which was free from every possible form of either excess or defect.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS PATIENCE.

Charity is patient, . . . endureth all things (1 Cor. xiii. 4—7).

God is patient because He is eternal (St. Augustine).

THE consideration of the patience of our Lord follows appropriately after the subject-matter of the two preceding chapters. When we recall the delicate sensitiveness of the Heart of Jesus, the acute susceptibility to every kind of suffering which His perfect organization caused in Him, when also we remember the magnitude of His love, as well as that all-comprehensiveness of His knowledge which laid bare to His sight every possible source and motive of suffering, when, in fine, we remember all that has been said respecting the intensity of His zeal, though He was frequently compelled to restrict it to the emotions of His Heart wherein it glowed like a pent-up fire, and proved a source of exquisite torment to Him; when we meditate upon all this, we are enabled to form some idea of the marvellous patience which, during three and thirty years, exhibited so perfect an image of the Divine patience of “the Eternal One.”

The contemplation of patience as a Divine attribute has ever afforded special delight to the saints and servants of God, and has in innumerable instances imparted to their spiritual life a reflection of the Divine grandeur and majesty, and has invested them as with a royal mantle. In order to impress ourselves with a just conception of the patience of God, we must keep before our minds the eternity of His existence and the eternity of the Divine decrees. "Thou art from everlasting."¹ We must likewise call to mind how, even in the creatures of the highest order, the angelic intelligences, His designs were frustrated; how the same tale was repeated in the second order of created intelligence, in the first man; finally how, age after age, men and nations have risen up in revolt against Him and said: "We will not serve." And yet all things go on in their appointed order, the heavenly bodies give their light and heat, the earth yields her fruit, and our Father Who is in Heaven ceases not to provide with all things needful us, His ungrateful children. If we would appreciate the sublime dignity of patience, we must study it as it is in God Himself. But although in Him we adore His calm and persevering endurance, and accept it as the definition of the Divine patience co-equal with His everlasting love, yet in His Divine Essence it could not be associated with suffering. He therefore assumed a nature in which the Divine power of endurance would be accompanied by the power also of suffering in that endurance, to an extent, as has been explained, all the more acute by reason of the delicate and perfect organization marking the human Soul and Body which He assumed, and by reason of the intense ardour of

¹ Psalm xcii. 2.

His love. Thus is the immutability and beauty of God's patience in its eternal calm brought home to us, to be rendered still more beautiful and more attractive through the human character blending with it in the Person of the Incarnate Son.

By means of the Humanity which He assumed God acquired the capability of suffering, not only in the general exercise of patience, but also in the particular exercise of it, which does not meet with sufficient attention amongst men—the patient acceptance, namely, of all the appointments of God's holy will—a patience this in regard of God Himself, which it was the especial design of God in human flesh to teach us to the full extent of its perfection. Many souls can suffer patiently for a certain time, but after that their human will rises up in revolt and, weary of constraint, endeavours to shake off the pressure of the Divine hand. Such persons are lacking in that longanimity which is chief among the fruits of the spirit of love and piety. In the Soul of Jesus a long-suffering patience was parent of the abiding sweetness with which He embraced every appointment of His Father throughout His life, whence the three-and-thirty years' subjection may be fitly described as one continued fulfilment of His self-oblation, "Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight."¹ This fulfilment changed its expression, but not its character, during His death-agony upon the Cross, when, in the instant of expiring, He cried out: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."² That, however, which should principally engage our attention at present is the beauty of our Lord's patience in His relations with men, the sufferings which their ingratitude, their coarse-

¹ St. Matt. xi. 26.

² St. Luke xxiii. 46.

ness, and coldness of feeling occasioned Him, and the absence of all return which He had to put up with from most of those in whose interests He spent Himself. It was thus He taught us to understand the loveliness of the Eternal patience and drew us to esteem it with a tender affection, since in Him it had been made perfect through suffering.

The first characteristic of the patience of Jesus was its universality. He had declared of His Eternal Father that He "maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."¹ In His own conduct also He exhibited the same patient endurance of ingratitude and wrong, whilst He too ceased not to rain benefits upon those who gave back nothing but bitter fruit in return. Jews, Samaritans, Scribes, Pharisees, open enemies and secret foes, all alike were the recipients of His favours, and although hope was, along with faith, excluded from our Lord's mind, on account of the Beatific Vision, so that there never was a moment wherein He did not know with perfect clearness "what was in man,"² or what was the number of those who should baffle all His loving designs and labours for their salvation, yet He acted as if He "hoped all things" from them, and He certainly endured all things even to the end, in the pursuit of their temporal and spiritual good. The hope which we exclude from our Lord's experience was not that of prevision and anticipation, but simply that of doubtful and fallible expectation. In attentively studying the history of man's Redemption, the development of Divine truth, the progress of Christ's Kingdom throughout the world, the rise and fall of nations, and finally the life of

¹ St. Matt. v. 45.

² St. John ii. 25.

individual souls, we cannot fail to be struck with the deliberateness of God's action, and the unwearied patience with which He waits for results. Four thousand years He devoted to the preparation of the universe for the coming of His only-begotten Son. Forty years were spent by the Israelites in journeying through the wilderness, ere they were allowed to enter the promised land. If, again, we were to note the long periods recorded in Holy Writ during which God has waited for the return to Him of different rebellious nations, those measured steps, so to speak, by which He has led up to the accomplishment of His eternal designs, we should wander far beyond the limits and objects of our present work. Enough has been said in evidence that the calm endurance of wrong, the tranquil expectation of results, and the undisturbed sweetness marking every act of the Son of God whilst He walked amongst men, indicated in Him the existence of a habit without beginning, a Divine attribute become incarnated with Him, and resulting from that plenitude of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit which inundated His human Soul.

It has been already stated that the patience of our Lord was universal in practice, and as this fact will strike us all the more if we consider it in detail, we shall briefly study His actions in relation to various classes of persons, taking first of all His treatment of His most virulent enemies. From the very outset of His preaching in the synagogues of Galilee our Lord was a mark for the envy and hatred of the rulers, and these feelings grew in the bitterness of their outward expression proportionably to the fame of His miracles, and the unprecedented influence He gained amongst the people. We find the Scribes and Pharisees

pursuing Him on every opportunity, attacking Him with malicious accusations and complaints, or else loudly condemning Him for blasphemy and violation of the Law and the traditions of the ancients. This was the case throughout the whole of His Ministry, their opposition becoming more violent and malignant in character as time went on. Yet our Lord met it with unvarying self-possession and Divine patience, making every allowance for the passionate excitement which had seized upon them. We have seen Him retiring from those places where He would be likely to come into collision with the Chief Priests and rulers, in order not to exasperate them by His presence, but give them time for reflection. Thus He acted whilst His Heart was lacerated by His keen perception of the inveterate malice filling their hearts and the obduracy goading them on to their ruin, and seeking to lay violent hands upon Himself. There is something inexpressibly pathetic in the long-suffering of Jesus towards His enemies up to the very last. It was but a few days before the closing scene of all that we hear Him so solemnly warning them to walk whilst they had the light, since in a little while that light would be no longer with them, and still holding out to them the promise that if happily they should believe in Him they themselves should be children of light. For in the beautiful patience of His Heart He could bear thus perseveringly to plead with them, even at the eleventh hour. As an exceptional example of the trial put upon His Divine endurance by His adversaries, we may instance the constant repetition of the attacks made against Him, one after another by the Scribes and Chief Priests, or the Pharisees and Sadducees during the last week of His teaching in the Temple. The former haughtily asked Him by what

authority He spoke and acted as He did, and these when silenced by the dignified reply of our Lord gave place to the Pharisees, who sought to ensnare Him by their quibbles regarding the payment of tribute to Cæsar. When they, in their turn, were baffled by the wisdom that filled them with wonder, then the Sadducees approached with the pretended difficulty about the woman who having had seven husbands could only belong to one of them in the resurrection, a future mystery in which they refused to believe. The Pharisees, hearing of the discomfiture of these last, returned to the attack, and one of them, a doctor of the Law, tempting Him asked our Lord: "Which is the great commandment in the Law?" Whereby he hoped to elicit an answer which might turn to the confusion of Jesus.¹ Thus, while they pursued Him without mercy, they succeeded only in giving opportunity for the manifestation of His Divine wisdom, and of the imperturbable endurance and longanimity which dwelt in His all-holy Soul.

Full as the Gospels are of testimonies to the patience wherewith Jesus bore the ingratitude of those to whom He came with such loving messages of peace, we may feel well assured they give us but an outline of that beautiful trait which impressed its Divine seal upon His human character, and invested His Person with the sweet majesty of the Eternal God. How often, nay, rather, how habitually, must not a longanimity, which is the perfection of patience, have been displayed before the eyes of the Heavenly Father, in His intercourse even with those who did not maliciously oppose Him. When we consider Him in constant contact with the coarse, the sordid, and the worldly

¹ St. Matt. xxii. 36.

mininded; when we reflect how often His efforts in behalf of souls were frustrated; when we read of those who at first had promised well, but afterwards went back and, to their eternal loss, walked no longer with Him; when we see Him persevering to the very end unwearied in His thankless toil, where even holy men would long ago have given up in the sad conviction that unsuccess was the portion God had destined for them, we cannot but marvel at the blind infatuation of men who failed to recognize that such Divine endurance betokened the indwelling of the Eternal patience in the Person of the promised Messias. For those, however, who "had eyes to see," it shed a ray of heavenly light and formed another link in the strong chain which bound them to our Lord.

But in regard of no one do we see the patience of Jesus so beautifully and strikingly manifested, as it was in regard of those from whom He had every reason to expect the most. All along He had known that Judas would betray Him, yet He suffered the traitor to remain in the company of the Apostles, sharing their privileges and receiving every proof of the tenderness of his Master's loving Heart. No prevision of infidelity or cowardice could induce our Lord to modify the generous prompting of His Soul, or indicate the slightest diminution in that affectionate confidence which He had placed in His disciples. Was there nothing Divine in this? Can we fail to recognize therein the principle of God's dealings from the beginning with all His creatures, with His chosen people Israel, and with ourselves? Occasionally, indeed, our Lord accords us a glimpse, as it were, of the suffering side of that patience of His which is so beautiful to look upon, and which, being human as well as Divine

becomes to us still more attractive, still more endearing, inasmuch as it is brought more intimately and familiarly home to our own sympathies. Thus, when Peter asked Jesus to expound to himself and the other Apostles the meaning of some parable which He had recounted to them, he was asked in answer: "Are you also yet without understanding?"¹ Jesus evidently wished to express His sorrow and astonishment that those who had been in His company so long, and had received from His lips such constant instruction, should still be found so ignorant, and so slow to comprehend even the elementary principles of the spiritual life. Again, when the Apostles had failed to drive the devil out of the lunatic boy, so that the father had to appeal to our Lord Himself on His descent from the Mount of the Transfiguration, Jesus exclaimed: "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?"² These words disclose the weariness that, as Man, He felt at having so long to wait for any progress in the spirit of faith and practice of virtue, corresponding to the many and great graces He had bestowed upon His Apostles. His was, however, but a sense of external weariness which only rendered still more resplendent the sweetness of His inexhaustible interior patience. We may gather what He must have felt on other occasions from the like expressions to which, it would appear, He designedly gave utterance in order to prevent our deceiving ourselves with the thought that the admirable longanimity perceived by us in Him was the result of insensibility, or that the union of the Divine Nature with the human shielded Him from suffering in His natural susceptibilities.

Thus we may form to ourselves some idea of the

¹ St. Matt. xv. 16.

² St. Matt. xvii. 16.

exceeding greatness of the patience that possessed His Soul, when we read His mild rebukes on finding that, although He had laid down so clearly the principles upon which His Kingdom was based, although His teaching had been so plain as to the humility He required of His disciples, and although the examples of it which He had given in His own Person had been so forcible and persuasive, He nevertheless heard them contesting eagerly and ambitiously among themselves, which should be the greatest in the Kingdom of their Divine Master; whilst two of the most favoured of their number went so far as to ask for themselves the very highest places beside His throne. On other occasions when they pressed our Lord to tell them how soon He would set up His Kingdom, they made it evident that they looked forward to it as the establishment of an earthly and material power, founded in great measure on worldly principles. Yet here, too, Jesus only gently reproves them, bearing with their ignorance and with the slow, unsatisfactory advance of their spiritual conceptions, and in His accustomed tranquillity and sweetness resuming the laborious task of rectifying the many errors into which they stumbled. Where men would have given up in weariness and despair the Man-God is unconquerable, though weighed down externally by the keenest sense of human fatigue and depression. Where men would have pronounced incorrigible the dispositions of those whom their protracted efforts had failed to convert, or raise to a height of perfection commensurate with the labour expended upon them, Jesus is tolerant, enduring, unflagging in His endeavours, and sweet in His patient waiting for better results; nay, all the more gentle and lovable still in the midst of His apparent want of

success. Such was the effect produced in the human Soul of the Divine Jesus by one of the most beautiful fruits of the Holy Spirit—longanimity; the presence of which renders patience itself Divine by imparting to it the God-like character of endurance when all seems failure, of perseverance in doing good when all seems hopeless. Other instances of this divinely human feature in the character of our Blessed Lord are presented to us in the long conversations which He vouchsafed to hold with persons who approached Him and entered into argument with Him. Mark, for example, His infinite condescension in permitting discussion on the part of those who should have simply listened to His words with profoundest reverence, and in answering their difficulties with such unwearied attention. Such was the character of His long conversation with Nicodemus, with Martha also, and with the Samaritan woman, to give but three samples out of innumerable others of the like kind, in the course of His Public Ministry.

Then, again, as through parables He endeavoured to make the infinite mercy of God intelligible to men, by the same method He illustrated to them His patient waiting for the correspondence with His gifts and the fruit which His liberality should bring in. Thus in the Parable of the Cockle Jesus drew before their eye the contrast between the haste of man in ejecting evil-doers, as signified by the servants who wished to uproot the cockle, and the patient endurance of them by the Heavenly Father, Who prefers to bear with them until the great harvest, lest in uprooting these the good produce should be uprooted also. Next, He pictured to His hearers the gradual development of grace in the soul, after the manner in which the earth

brings forth its fruit: "First the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear."¹ Again, in His anxious longing to correct the tendency of the human mind to discouragement at sight of the slow steps by which, with the best of wills, it makes advance in sanctity and virtue, Jesus represents the patience where-with God tarries for the fruit to which He is entitled. Thus it was that by word and example our Divine Lord ever showed forth during His mortal life the characteristics of His eternal patience, the Divine attribute which was to cost His human Soul so dearly, and put its long-suffering forbearance to so severe a test.

As our special object is to contemplate the beauty of Jesus in each of His perfections, prescinding from the value, merit, and instruction to be gathered from each for ourselves, we may heighten our appreciation of the attractiveness and perfection of the divinely human patience of Christ by contrasting it with the imperfections which necessarily and invariably mar its exercise amongst men. There are indeed to be found some persons who exhibit a wonderful control over themselves in occasions of provocation, or who appear to be endowed with an unusual power of enduring pain and various other kinds of suffering, without their patience having in it any of those characteristics which render it so lovely a virtue in the Person of our Lord. It may be taken as proof of a certain strength of mind or force of will, or again it may come from insensibility, and so forfeit the title of true patience which in human nature involves the element of suffering, just as true longanimity signifies long-suffering or persevering endurance of pain and sorrow in view of the glory of

¹ St. Mark iv. 28.

God. Now, where patience amongst men, resulting from any of those causes we have just referred to, halts in the motive and spirit which animated the same virtue in our Lord, it will not only fail to be attractive, but in many instances will be positively unattractive. It will be either sullen in its silence, or stolid through its want of feeling; or, on the opposite hand, an acute sense of its wrongs will taint it with that victimized air which is even more eloquent of self-pity than words could be. Such patience is truly unlovely, and utterly fails to suggest to our minds the patience exercised by Jesus, so sweet in its long-suffering, so forgetful of self, so absorbed in the one thought of enduring all things, of hoping all things right on to the end, with the sole object of the glory of the Father, and of the benefit of souls.

This identifies the forbearance of Jesus with our future happiness, "and accounts the long-suffering of our Lord salvation."¹ This clearly and beautifully makes known to us in Him "the riches of the goodness and patience and long-suffering of God."²

¹ ² St. Peter iii. 15.

¹ Romans ii. 4.

CHAPTER XIII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS SORROWS.

A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmity (Isaias liii. 3).

THERE are many beautiful things in this world of ours which bear traces of the Divine hand laid on them in their creation. Others there are which have been rendered beautiful by the touch of the Incarnate Word, and enriched with a virtue which, until His coming, had been unknown to them. One of the foremost in receiving this new grace is sorrow. Our Lord opened out wide His Heart to embrace it, and it became His inseparable companion throughout the three-and-thirty years of His varied life, and by such context was ennobled and rendered lovely in the eyes of angels and of men.

Before the Incarnation sorrow was regarded rather as a mark of God's displeasure, and a badge of ignominy; nay, in the mourning of many saints of the Old Law we fail to recognize those characters of beauty which we so readily discern in that of the saints and servants of God in His new Kingdom of love and grace. It was only when He had come Who should declare its excellence and pronounce those blessed in whom it dwelt, that sorrow and mourning were clothed in all their splendour. It was then that men became habituated to associate sorrow with Him Who was "beautiful above the sons of men," and saw

it for the first time deified, as it were, in His Divine Person; and henceforth it was to act as a magnet attracting the hearts of men, and to assume a power of chastening, softening, and beautifying, wherever its hallowed presence rested.

Jesus has touched many things in His human flesh, and wherever He has laid His hand He has left an indelible impression of beauty, but to none has He imparted a more Divine loveliness and consequently a more sanctifying influence than to sorrow, whence it may be called the guardian angel of the principles of the new Kingdom, whose mission it is to keep alive the memory of the Divine Lawgiver. The sorrows of the Incarnate Son of God had been predicted in most pathetic language by the Royal Psalmist, and by the Prophets *Isaias* and *Jeremias*. While we read them we listen not only to the tones of a Divine grief mourning over the ruin of souls and the frustration of the eternal designs in their regard, but also to the accents of human sorrow breaking forth from a human Heart at the sight of its rejected love, and pouring itself out in plaintive measure from as many sources of sorrow and anguish, as are to be found in the soul of man. For, not one of the various fountains of sorrow which it is the lot of man to know was wanting in the Soul of Jesus. If we could only remember this truth, we should draw from it abundant consolation in our own griefs, whatever may be their cause; but we are too prone, in meditating on the sorrows of the Son of God, to limit the objects which called them forth to such as we consider consistent with His Divine Nature, forgetting that He took a human Soul with its many susceptibilities, and that in His human Heart He carried our every grief.

We shall arrive at a better understanding of the boundless sources of sorrow within the Heart of our Saviour, if we reflect upon the nature of sorrow itself. Sorrow is, we must bear in mind, the offspring of original sin, and under whatever form it presents itself it is the consequence of the first fall, which brought sorrow and weeping and death into the world. It is then in this sense a product not of Heaven but of earth, yet it is so fruitful a means of glorifying God that we may apply to it those words of the inspired Psalmist: "All ye things that spring up in the earth (of which sorrow is one), bless the Lord." Although sorrow springs up from the soil, over which sin has sown briars wherever we place our foot, it has become transformed into a Divine plant, budding forth beauty and endowed with a virtue which perhaps nothing else of earthly origin possesses, because the Son of God has touched it and given it a Divine character in the crucible of His own Sacred Heart, and has glorified it, investing with its spirit His Humanity at the right hand of the Father, where He reigns for ever as "the Man of Sorrows." So attractive and, at the same time, so elevating in its influence is this angel of the New Law, as we have named it, that there seems to be something wanting to the perfection of any created loveliness where its presence has never been felt. It is the sigh of the exile for the eternal home; it is the beauty of Adam in his penitential love, and of all his descendants mourning the Paradise which he lost to them; it is the royal purple of the children of God, showing their affinity with the Crucified and entitling them to a place in their Father's love. All this can be said of sorrow without exaggeration, since the Church can sing of the sin which caused it: *O felix*

culpa, quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere redemptorem—
“O happy fault, that merited to obtain such and so great a Saviour.”

The truth stated by us above is reflected also in the works of nature. The scenery which most readily inspires elevated thought is not that of smiling homesteads and sunny meadows, suggestive only of material happiness. The countenance that is ever wreathed in smiles, and bears no trace at any time of pensive thought upon the brow, may be beautiful in its outlines, but its beauty is at best superficial and imperfect. The music that breathes through its tones no pathos of sorrow may please the ear, but will never elevate the mind, nor awaken in it any ennobling or purifying aspirations. When we come to consider the influence of sorrow in proving the character of men and fulfilling its mission to their souls, the value of its aid in heightening the effects of natural and supernatural beauty can be still better appreciated. The character which has felt as yet no chastening hand of sorrow lies still in the rough, and its capacity for high and noble achievements remains undeveloped. The gold that may be there is crusted over and mingled with alloy; the crucible of suffering can alone cleanse or refine it. How many are they whom one can barely tolerate until they have been brought under the influence of sorrow, after which they may have become so completely changed as scarcely to be known for the same. What better proof could we have of the beautifying effects of this unction of the soul distilled from the Cross of Jesus? The soul that has had no experience of it, is as defective as would be a richly illuminated book of devotions, in which pictures of Jesus and Mary found no place. Were every other

proof of the loveliness of sorrow wanting, the sight of them alone were enough to remind us of the beauty, and to bring before us all the sanctity, of sorrow. By suffering lost man was redeemed, and from this we learn its efficacy; but in addition to this, He Who redeemed us, has drawn the hearts of all men to Himself, and this convinces us of the magnet force of its beauty.

Again, the Ever Blessed Mother of God is to us an epitome of the sweetness of sorrow, for she is its Queen. She had no sins to expiate, being herself the one spotless lily among the children of Adam. Neither could she in a strict and direct sense expiate the sins of men, seeing that this was the exclusive office of her Divine Son. But yet she suffered in Him and for His sake, and because no creature was ever united with Him as she was, so none could share as she did in His sorrow. That love of Mary to which the contemplation of her sorrows gives birth in our souls, and which is matured by actual sorrow borne in union with her, is the most efficacious because the deepest, most tender of all forms of devotion to our Lady, and it conduces to the attainment of an intimate knowledge and love of Jesus.

If, by an impossibility, we could have figured to ourselves our Lord without sorrow, He would have been deprived of one of the strongest cords drawing us to His love. We should still be charmed by His beauty under other aspects, we should admire His perfections, we should adore Him as our God-Saviour, we should love Him for His goodness and mercy to us, but our love would lack all that tender pathos which now we feel, when contemplating Him as the Man of Sorrows, Who tests by His own experience our human miseries, our heartaches, our disappointments

and griefs of every kind, for by these He claims our sympathy and elicits the love of our compassion.

We should not have been able, as now, to look up into His tenderly sympathetic face, or nestle close to His Heart when our own seems well-nigh breaking. Nor could we have felt that He had endured the very same anguish which we are now enduring, that He had made acquaintance with its perhaps secret or intricate sources, its aggravating circumstances, its concealed thorns, its unsuspected bitterness, its depth and its intensity, beyond the power of even the fondest Mother to feel, aided by all the intelligence and keenness of penetration which only a mother's love can impart.

Blessed for ever be His Divine wisdom, and blessed His Divine and human love which in His own Sacred Person has shed over sorrow a splendour more radiant than the loveliest of sunsets as it tinges each object with its golden rays, and invests it with its own rich but pensive beauty, while it sinks slowly to its western bed. If, in the spirit of prayer, we meditate upon the thirty-three years of our Lord's life on earth, we shall find that sorrow forms an integral part of His human loveliness. It enters into every mystery, chastening but not diminishing our joy, and it imparts to each one a deeper motive. It meets us in at least the greater number of the Gospel narratives, though every person perhaps does not detect its presence, being wanting in that delicacy of perception which intimate knowledge of our Blessed Lord and familiarity with His life as related in the Gospels alone can afford. The mystery of Bethlehem is full of it, in spite of the Angels' songs, and their promise of peace on earth and glory to God on high; nay, it was exactly by means of the sorrows of the Babe that peace and glory were to be purchased.

But forty days shall have passed, and holy Simeon will pronounce the Child "a sign to be contradicted," and will lament that, through the sufferings of this Child, the sword shall pierce His Mother's Heart. Through all the mysteries of the Holy Childhood we encounter the same spiritual presence as in after-years, although under somewhat different aspects.

During the long years of the Hidden Life He passed at Nazareth, peaceful though they appeared, sorrow was His inseparable companion. There was for Him no future, as there was for Him no past. The course of ages that had rolled along since the first created moment, and were to follow on until the day of doom, were all equally present to His vision. Not a sin that ever had been or should be committed, escaped His knowledge. Every vicissitude of His future Church, every abuse of grace, every abandonment of an apostolic or religious vocation, all these were pressing on His Heart. Every sorrow also which His loved ones should have to bear, every temptation to which they should be exposed, weighed upon His Soul during the years of His Hidden Life with an aggravation and intensity inevitable from His special fitness and capacity for suffering. A life of such deep secret sorrow promised a beauty all its own, which the most brilliant career could never hope to share. Through it Jesus has hallowed every other life of hidden sorrow since the world began, on to the end of time, and has taught countless hearts how to keep their sorrows sacred to themselves and Him, thus preparing a resting-place in the Heart of the Man of Sorrows wherein to lay their griefs.

In the varying incidents of His Public Life the same shadow of a gentle sorrow hovered around Him

still. It manifested itself visibly in divers forms, whilst invisibly it abode permanently within His Sacred Heart. The sorrows of our Lord's Passion may be regarded as the climax of those which He had endured through His entire life, and by the ineffaceable anticipation of them they cast their deep shadows over all that had gone before. Although, if we regard the exterior circumstances of His Public Ministry, they pressed upon Him more lightly, yet in the inner recesses of His being there was no lightening of them. Hence the anguish of Gethsemane and the cry, "I thirst," uttered from the Cross were but the outward expression of the hidden grief of Nazareth. Moreover, the sorrow deeply embedded in the Soul of our Blessed Lord assumed different forms, of which, unless we carefully and frequently meditate on His inner life, as far as this is disclosed to us, we shall entirely lose sight.

Experience teaches many of us how greatly a permanent grief is aggravated by the additional trial of what we commonly call *worries*, *anxieties*, or *cares*. St. Paul did more than hint at these, when amongst his various sufferings he enumerated to the Corinthians: "Besides those things, which are without: my daily instance, the solicitude for all the Churches."¹ The things which were without counted as those which were over and above, and external to the inner sorrows and afflictions which he bore in his soul through his love for God, amid the amazing persecutions which he endured at the hands of his enemies.

Now if "solicitude" simply could add so much weight to the sufferings of an Apostle, what must have been the weight pressing on the Heart of Jesus during

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 23.

His entire life? It is true there could have been no anxiety, no shadow of excitement or agitation in the Soul of our Blessed Lord; but that He permitted "trouble" to enter into His Soul we gather from our Lord's own words: "Now is My Soul troubled."¹ And again at the Last Supper: "When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit."² The nature of this "trouble" we may infer from the occurrences which gave rise to it, and from the words which fell from our Lord's lips at the time. Upon the first occasion He had just spoken in figurative language of His approaching Death, setting forth the conditions or qualifications necessary in those who would "minister" to Him—contempt namely for this present life and the determination to follow Him in His sufferings. Shortly after announcing the troubles of His Soul, He went on to speak of His "being lifted up from the earth," thus indicating what death He should die. Upon this the multitude expressed their disbelief in a Christ Who should die, and then Jesus gave them the grave warning to walk whilst they had the light, lest the darkness overtake them. His next act was to go away and hide Himself from them, with the sad reflection that "whereas He had done so many miracles before them they believed not in Him."³

That He permitted His holy Soul to experience trouble at the approach of His Passion we all know, but our Lord's action to which we have referred seems to lay bare fresh sources of suffering in this chapter of our Lord's sorrows. Scarcely could He speak of His Death without painfully reflecting upon the vast multitudes for whose salvation it was to prove unavailing. How few even of those to whom He now

¹ St. John xii. 27.² St. John xiii. 21.³ St. John xii. 37.

addressed Himself had sufficient love towards Him to fulfil the conditions requisite for becoming His disciples, or could set any value on the principles by which His Kingdom was to be governed. Then the sorrowful thought pressed heavily upon Him of the little time now left them for conversion, while they were still so blind and callous in their unbelief, notwithstanding all the convincing proofs He had given them of His Divinity. Well may He have declared His Soul to be troubled, where there were so many afflicting causes weighing it down. Amongst these was the fear or solicitude He vouchsafed to undergo in the knowledge that countless souls were allowing valuable days to slip by, designed indeed to be days of salvation, but converted by them into fresh seals of their eternal condemnation.

The second occasion on which we are expressly told that our Lord was "troubled in spirit" was at the Last Supper, immediately before His announcement that one of the Apostles should betray Him. He had a short time previously quoted the prophecy of David, "He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against Me."¹ He had explained to them that He spoke not of them all, that He knew whom He had chosen, but that the Scripture must be fulfilled. He had already hinted to them that there was a traitor amongst them by the words, "You are not all clean," showing how painfully present to His mind was the thought of the unhappy Judas. After the prediction mentioned above, He turned aside to remark that whosoever should receive those whom He sent, received Him, and that whosoever received Jesus, received the Father Who sent Him. It appeared as if He was

¹ Psalm xl. 10; St. John xiii. 18.

reluctant to reveal to them plainly that one of their number should betray Him. Later on, however, as though the abundance of His Heart's trouble impelled Him to confide to them its cause, He declared solemnly: "Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray Me."¹ In disclosing this fact, He mentioned undoubtedly the most bitter of all the interior sufferings of the Passion, for it not only intimated the fall of an Apostle, but involved the further tragedy of the eternal loss of his soul. In addition even to this primary cause of our Lord's sorrow respecting Judas personally, followed another keen "trouble," in which Jesus met with fullest sympathy from the dismay and anxiety that He knew must sorely vex the minds of His faithful Apostles, upon their learning that the traitor indicated was actually one of themselves. Present at the same time to our Lord's sorrowing Heart was the sad knowledge of Peter's approaching denial, an anguish which He restrained Himself to bear in silence each time that His ear heard the Apostle's too confident protestation of fidelity. Nay, He could not look upon any one of them without the sad reflection that, loudly as each now declared his readiness to die with his Lord, within a few short hours they would all forsake Him and fly.²

But how numerous were the occasions on which His disciples were far from affording to the people by whom they were surrounded the edification which He desired. This was owing in truth, not so much to any wilful intention of contradicting our Lord, as to their mere dulness of comprehension and their insufficient readiness in applying the principles He had laid down for their guidance. In opening out His Heart to a keen sense of these various troubles, our gracious Lord

¹ St. John xiii. 21.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 56.

desired that it should experience the ebb and flow of affections and emotions even as we do, in order that He might possess an experimental knowledge of our sorrows and our troubles. It was on this account that He allowed Himself to exhibit, and even feel interiorly, fresh accessions of pain and grief when, from time to time, He returned to renew His efforts for the conversion of persons whose hearts He saw on each occasion only hardened themselves the more against Him. A trouble like this became more profound as time wore on, and renewed itself on each occasion that He returned searching in vain after the lost sheep. This explains how our Lord was constantly surrounded by painful, and as we should say, difficult circumstances; and although He saw clearly the issue of every one, and adored in each event the Divine appointment, thus excluding entirely from His Soul the fret of anxiety, yet that which we should feel in similar occasions, provided there be in it nought of imperfection, He permitted His Sacred Heart to experience in its full pain and bitterness.

All the solicitude of His Chief Pontiff who, at this hour, faithfully strives to ward off the perils which threaten the Bark of Peter, and gives himself no rest in seeking to provide remedies against the evils that seem ready to immerse society in a deluge of irreligion, all this solicitude has first borne heavily on the human Soul of Jesus. All the anxieties of zealous pastors, all the many intricate difficulties which so often perplex upright, well-meaning, God-serving men—these have first been carefully weighed and sifted in the Heart of Him, Who alone could be “troubled” without anxiety, wearied with sorrow without a shadow of despondency; watching every adverse circumstance

and labouring to redress it, with often but poor success, yet with no loss of entire self-possession, grieving over failure with undiminished calm.

We have made direct allusion to only a few incidents in the life of our Blessed Lord, wherein the trouble of His Soul was allowed to be manifested, that we might clearly discern and appreciate it. Much, however, is to be learnt from the simple fact that under every head in which we ourselves can possibly experience suffering, our Lord has Himself first made trial of the same. We, indeed, have dipped our feet into the margin of the current, but the torrent itself has passed into the Soul of God Incarnate, and has filled and flooded it, as with the swelling tide of a mighty river. It would be well for us if, in many of the trying emergencies in which we must inevitably find ourselves placed, we would recall to mind how our Blessed Lord endured His troubles. Some persons appear anxious to prove too much, assuring us that there ought to be no trouble in our souls, but they are probably men who make no distinction between trouble, in the sense which our Lord gave to the word, and mental disturbance, irritation, or demoralization. The latter states of mind are indeed imperfections resulting from the Fall, and so could find no resting-place in the Soul of Jesus. In ourselves they form matter for self-discipline and interior mortification, but until these have accomplished their work, the excitement and disorder of an ill-regulated mind which so often afflict us, and which resemble so imperfectly and inaccurately the calmly sustained troubles of the Soul of Jesus, must be borne with, after the manner that we bear with sickness, until the remedies applied have produced their effect. An attempt therefore to exclude in theory all trouble

from the soul is virtually to pretend for it an immunity which the Soul of our Lord Himself did not possess: "Now is My Soul troubled."

Passing from what may be said to constitute the trouble of our Lord to His more direct and prominent sorrows, we must recollect the particular events which took place in the Garden of Gethsemane, and in other scenes of the Sacred Passion. We need not dwell upon them here, as they have been more or less treated of elsewhere, and are dealt with far more copiously in books professedly devoted to the study of the Passion. Suffice it to observe how in that awful Agony the whole world's sin lay before our Blessed Lord, not only as a terrible vision which forced itself upon His attention and drew forth His sorrow, but rather as something identified with Himself and covering Him as with a sable garment, nay, as an evil blight which entered into the very sanctuary of His all-holy Soul, as His own sin, of which He bore the awful responsibility before His Father.

Enough has been said elsewhere to prove our Lord's knowledge of the malice of sin, and of its consequences, of its outrage on the rights of God, and of the cruel wounds inflicted by it on His own love; enough also to teach us how profound must have been the sorrow inundating His Soul, in its expiation for all the sins of the whole world. And in order that we might be able to measure the intensity of His grief, and of His urgent desire to win from us our most affectionate love and compassion, He could find no stronger terms in which to convey to us the vastness of His interior Passion than to exclaim: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death!"¹ Then, as each scene in the tragedy of

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 38.

the Passion followed in its order, the combined sorrows of the whole life of Jesus Christ attained their extreme culminating-point when the end was reached. As sorrow looked forth upon us while we gazed down into the crib of Bethlehem, and proved itself to be the abiding companion of our Lord in every phase of His sojourn upon earth, so, while we watch Him expiring on the Cross and listen to His dying words, it is still the Man of Sorrows Whose eyes meet our own to claim our devoted love, and Whose sad voice falls upon our ear in words of utmost anguish. When we cast our eye back to the acts and words of our Lord during the course of His life and call to mind the general tone of His parables, we feel aware of the same impression of sorrow pervading them, like the effect of some melody through which the minor key softly breathes its plaintive notes and fills the ear with a sad and peculiar beauty of its own.

We may especially instance the Parables of the Pounds, and of the Talents, of the Vineyard let out to husbandmen, of the Wedding-supper, of the Barren Fig-tree, and of the Sower with his seed, for in each of these we have the mournful and oft-repeated figure of God's rejection by His creatures, of the wilful waste or misuse of His grace, and the frustrating of His designs. A strain of sorrow meets us everywhere in connection with the mysteries of the Incarnation, and it could not be otherwise. As sorrow entered the world through sin, so Heaven was to be regained through sorrow. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?"¹

The laws of the new Kingdom were all framed in accordance with this principle, and they were so beauti-

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 26.

fully illustrated in the Person of the Word Incarnate that a sorrowful character became stamped upon them, the most powerful of all attractions to eyes divinely favoured and enlightened. Without this characteristic feature, the Gospel narratives, the parables, the words of Jesus, in fine the story of His life from end to end, would have been robbed of half their loveliness, of half their magnetic force. The truth is that sorrow finds and touches in the human heart a sympathetic chord. It moves in harmony with the susceptibilities of our nature and calls into being within it all that is most noble and most pure-hearted. It is, we must own, a condition resulting from our fallen state, but yet is it one which in that state refines and elevates us, and marvellously assists us in our efforts to regain the true Paradise above. When sorrow therefore draws us in the direction of our Lord, that is, when the chastened and hallowed sentiments it elicits tend towards Him, and the desires that have become detached from sordid and earthly views cleave to Him, sorrow has evidently been for us one of those cords of Adam, those "chains of love," which make our hearts His captives. It is the mystery of the Cross which leads souls to Jesus. Hearts to which He would have been a stranger, had they never known sorrow, learn to love Him; and, contemplating in His Person the beauty of sorrow, become enamoured of it for His sake.

More than enough has now been said and considered as to the power of sorrow over the human heart, and of its beauty when studied in the Person of our Lord and in connection with the mystery of His Incarnation; and yet, what we have explicitly stated is merely suggestive of the far more that lies beneath. It is in the hushed silence of the prayer of

union that the loveliness of the sorrows of Jesus will fully develope itself to the mind's eye, and cast its chain around the heart. It will hover as an angel of love above every mystery of the Incarnate Word. Its sweet plaintive strain will mingle with His voice, as He speaks to us in the secret of our souls, and when He invites us to share with Him in His sorrows and trouble and heartaching, in order that our union with Him may be drawn closer, our sorrow will then be "transfigured" before us, and will be surrounded with a halo, like golden rays of glory. For we shall behold the loveliness of that sorrow in the light of Nazareth, and Gethsemane, and Calvary, in a word, in the light of the beauty of the "Man of Sorrows."

CHAPTER XIV.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS JOYS.

He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost (St. Luke x. 21).

IN contemplating the sorrows of our Blessed Lord we have considered an experience which was the natural and inevitable consequence of His taking upon Himself our humanity, and by which He gave to human sorrow a new character; transformed, beautified, and spiritualized it. In turning now to consider His joys, we enter upon an experience which He brought with Him from the bosom of the Father, and which was an inherent attribute of His Divine Nature. No human or angelic intelligence can conceive the joy of God in the eternal contemplation of Himself. The utmost we can do is to believe with ready faith what it must be, since the unveiled vision of Him, as far as it may be given to angels and to men to enjoy it, will form their beatitude throughout eternity, for we must remember there are depths of uncreated loveliness in God which no created intelligence, even that of the highest angel, can ever fathom.

If it were possible for us to realize the ecstasy of joy in a redeemed soul on its first entrance into Heaven, when it turns with its first act of contemplation and of adoration towards God, and if we reflect how that act, steeped in highest and purest joy, will be the permanent occupation of the beatified soul

for unending ages, and, so far from losing its charm, will be ever fresh, ever widening out, in proportion as new beauties are unfolded to our enraptured gaze—were we to realize all this, the sufferings of time would assuredly seem light, even though they lasted till the Day of Judgment itself. Now the vision, which to the blessed is an exhaustible source of ineffable joy, dwelt ever present with our Lord in a two-fold manner. First, He Who was One with the Father by His Divine Generation possessed the communication of the whole Divine Essence, and thus contemplated in Himself all the beauty and perfection which He beheld in the Eternal Father. His Divinity was to Him fraught with such joy as only He could know or feel, it was the eternal joy of the Eternal Son, a joy incomprehensible to us as being essentially connatural to God Himself. Nor, in the second place, can we form to ourselves any conception of the abiding joy of His human Soul in the Beatific Vision. We only know that the beatitudes of Jesus are the image and model of those which we ourselves shall possess, when admitted into the perfect fruition of God.

Joy, as has been said, is a concomitant, or more properly an inherent perfection of the Divine Nature, in God there can be no sorrow; wherefore He became Man, just in order to become capable of “bearing our infirmities and carrying our griefs.” His Divine Nature then was the first source of the joy that was in Jesus. His Humanity was anointed with a two-fold unction—that of His Divinity and that of the Holy Ghost; and this unction, like a full torrent, inundated His Soul with the joy of which we are about to speak. His joy in His Divinity may be taken as perhaps, to some extent, feebly reflected in the joy experienced by our-

selves under the operation of Divine grace, through the union of our souls with God and with Jesus in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, wherein we receive His Body, Soul, and Divinity. Not only did our Lord rejoice in the possession of His Divine Nature for its own sake, but also for the sake of that humanity which, upon a multitude of grounds, was so dear to Him. It was ineffable joy to Him that His Humanity was, by reason of the Hypostatic Union, anointed with the Divinity. That it was anointed also by the Holy Ghost in the plenitude of His gifts and graces, was another and distinct source of joy to our Lord's most pure and enraptured Soul. The words recorded by St. Luke afford much matter for consideration respecting the joy which resided in the Soul of Jesus, and which never, for one instant, departed from it: "In that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Ghost."¹

Before proceeding, however, to meditate on the marvellous sources of joy within this blessed Soul, let us make it clear how the permanent presence of that joy in no way prevented the entrance of sorrow also, or its continuance there, as a lasting disposition of the soul. Our Lord's Divine power wrought the miracle whereby the joy and beatitude filling the superior part of His Soul so restrained its exercise as not to flow over into the lower part, nor hinder His natural susceptibilities from being acted upon by those exterior influences which were to impart to Him an experimental knowledge of our sufferings. He might have prevented all that anguish of His Soul, and all the pain of His Body which He voluntarily endured; but, as it was, every event that would naturally cause pain to us, caused pain to our Lord, whether in His Body

¹ St. Luke x. 21.

or the lower part of His Soul, or in the natural affections of His Sacred Heart. Thus, both joy and blessedness, bitterness and anguish, existed together in one and the same Person. Let us then now return to the text which we have quoted. Although it is but once recorded in the Gospel history that our Lord "rejoiced in the Holy Ghost," yet we know that such was the abiding disposition of His Soul. The grace of the Hypostatic Union was the principle of all the favours conferred upon the Sacred Humanity, into which the Divine Word poured the most abundant richness of His treasures with a fulness far surpassing our utmost understanding. It was declared of His Divine Person: "We have seen Him full of grace and truth;"¹ "In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."²

It must be remembered that our Lord, as the adorable Head of the Church, possessed within Himself the plenitude of all those graces which were to supply vitality to its members. His Divine Humanity was, as it were, a vast reservoir whence should flow torrents of all graces into the souls of men, until the end of time. Hence within His blessed Soul resided, each in its inexhaustible perfection, every kind of grace necessary for the sanctification of His spiritual members. And each grace was to Him a source of ineffable joy, as in its measure each one is the same to the souls of His saints and faithful servants.

First of all, sanctifying grace was necessary to our Lord, in order that His Soul might be holy with a formal and essential holiness, as well as with a personal sanctity. Such was the precise and most legitimate motive placed by our Lord before His Apostles, when

¹ St. John i. 14.

² Coloss. ii. 3.

they returned rejoicing in the marvellous works which they had wrought through His Name. He bade them rejoice, not so much in that which might be to them an occasion of vainglory, but rather in that sanctifying grace which alone could entitle them to have their "names written in Heaven." If then the possession of sanctifying grace was to be so great a joy to men, it must have been the same to Him Whose human Soul was sanctified according to the laws which regulate our own sanctification. This fact will also explain to us why souls who live habitually in the friendship of God, and who hope in all humility that their names will be "written in Heaven," are for the most part full of joy and of the praises of God, ever singing songs of thanksgiving to Him Who has sanctified them in His Blood. Such "rejoicing in the Holy Ghost" as this, is an act most familiar to those whose souls are in a high degree conformed to that of God Incarnate. We shall have more to say hereafter on this cause of our Lord's rejoicing; for the present we must pass on to other sources of joy and other varieties in that grace with which His Soul was enriched.

Besides habitual sanctifying grace, we must consider that actual and assisting grace which enabled our Lord's human Soul to produce supernatural acts, impossible to it if aided merely by the sanctifying Spirit of God; and this need was in itself a joy to the humble Heart of Jesus, Who had taken on Himself the form and nature of a servant. These actual graces, it is true, were not, according to many eminent theologians, bestowed in order to excite our Lord to supernatural acts, for of those He Who habitually enjoyed the Beatific Vision stood in no need.¹ He

¹ Suarez, *De Incarnatione*, disp. xviii. sec. iv.

saw at all times clearly the Divine will, and without an instant's hesitation thought only of performing with joy all that it asked for; being occupied solely with these supernatural interior and exterior acts during the uninterrupted course of His entire life. In such way did He rejoice that these actual graces enabled Him, as Man, to produce supernatural acts of patience in suffering, of fortitude, of endurance in bearing injuries, and of so persevering in the exhibition of all virtues as to glorify His Father with a perfection to which no human soul had ever attained before. It was by a very extraordinary actual grace that the Holy Ghost inspired and strengthened St. Stephen to make his wonderful address before the Council, resulting in his martyrdom. The heavens, we are told, were opened, and the vision was granted him of that Jesus Whom he had preached, and Who now appeared in His glory, at the right hand of God. As the stones fell thick and fast upon him, he then prayed with so great nobleness of soul that the sins of his enemies might not be laid to their charge. Those again were actual graces which moved St. Paul's great heart to bound with joy in the midst of his tribulations, and which sent forth the other Apostles from the presence of the Council "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."¹ These and the like examples will give us a more perfect understanding of the immeasurable value of those actual graces which possessed and guided the Soul of our Blessed Lord, and of the extent to which they were in Him matter for joy and thanksgiving.

As to the grace called *gratis data*, we have already seen that the Head of the Church and Saviour of the

¹ Acts v. 41.

universe must possess it of necessity in all its plenitude. Hence every one of the marvellous gifts enumerated by St. Paul as bestowed on certain individuals, not indeed for the personal advantage of the recipient, but for the service of others for whose salvation such men were to labour, these gifts one and all were united in the Soul of Jesus for the benefit of those for whose good He employed them during this mortal life. They were wanted likewise for those who should hereafter receive them in proportion to the needs and nature of their ministry. That these graces also were a source of joy to the human Soul of Jesus, we cannot doubt, inasmuch as they enabled Him to obtain such marvellous results in the interests of those whom He came to save. We have indeed but to turn to the pages of the Gospel, and there read the many evidences of His joy in the words of thanksgiving that so frequently burst forth from His Sacred Heart to His Father in Heaven. In the instance adduced above, although our Lord had warned His Apostles to moderate their joy on account of the wonders they had wrought by means of the grace bestowed upon them for that purpose; and although He had bidden them rejoice rather in the gifts of sanctifying grace, yet we are told how, in that same hour, Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Ghost," and poured out His Soul in thanksgivings that God had "hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them to little ones."¹ Nor was it for them only He rejoiced, but for all who, following their example, should be hereafter childlike believers in Him and in His Church, and whose hearts should be disposed to receive the graces He was willing to bestow upon them for the exercise of their ministry.

¹ St. Luke x. 21.

When we consider therefore the wonderful works which have been wrought in the Church of God through the grace (*gratis data*) of miracles, of prophecy, of discernment of spirits, of corporal cures, of interpretation of the Scriptures, and the like, by that long line of Apostles, Doctors, Virgins, and Saints of every race and condition, from our Lord's time down to our own, and to be continued until the very end, we may conjecture how the Soul of Jesus must have been flooded with joy when that vast vista lay spread out before Him. What an increase too must have come to His joy from the knowledge that all the graces which had brought forth those works had flowed from Himself, as the Divine Source of every grace, and as the Head of all those who should hereafter act in His Name.

Yet this was but one of the many fountains of Divine joy that dwelt in the Soul of our Lord. We read in the Life of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, how, whenever she read the expression—"Will of God," such torrents of joy inundated her soul that she fell into an ecstasy. From what did so great a love of the Divine will spring, if not from the Heart of Him to Whom her own was so intimately united? St. Teresa exclaimed, and we know that her life was in the fullest accord with her words, "Oh! how great a joy it is to suffer in doing the will of God." Now, if such supernatural joy is to be found in the saints—and, in truth, similar instances might be multiplied to any extent—how exceedingly great must have been the joy of Jesus, the Saint of saints, Who declared that will to be His food, and Who came down from Heaven expressly to accomplish it in all its perfection, amidst every kind of suffering. Joy in doing the will of God infallibly accompanies the growth of union with Him, and since

the Divine will almost invariably implies a share in bearing His Cross, joy in suffering must inevitably follow. From this we may gather the fulness of our Lord's joy, since every instant of His life was employed in doing His Father's will. Holy Writ tells us that "there is joy among the angels over one sinner doing penance."¹ But what is the angelic joy in comparison with that of the Lord of the angels, Who was Himself, moreover, the very origin of that act of penance over which the heavenly host rejoice.

This brings us to the contemplation of an especial joy in the Heart of Jesus, which perhaps lies closer to our grasp since it bears a marked relation to ourselves, and appeals to our tenderest sympathies. Let us ask ourselves whether we have been, or intend being, a source of joy to our Blessed Lord. Every act of fervent sorrow for sin committed, every sincere resolve to do penance has been to Jesus a cause of rejoicing. In the light shed by that wonderful yet awful knowledge which He possesses, He looked forward to the end of time, while yet He saw from the beginning, from Adam's repentance until that of the last penitent, ere the day of doom shall have arrived, every conversion which through faith in Him and love towards His Sacred Heart had been and should be wrought. Not a tear can fail, not a heart be wrung with contrition, but His eye perceives it. He foresaw the years of hardship and suffering to which thousands would condemn themselves in reparation for graces squandered and lives wasted, or perhaps worse. He beheld the prodigals of every age coming to Him from afar off, and already in the joy of His Heart He pressed them to His bosom, and re clothed them in the first

¹ St. Luke xv. 10.

robe which they had so recklessly cast aside. In all this there was for our Lord a two-fold cause of rejoicing. In the first place, the salvation of souls would people the Kingdom of His Father with redeemed ones, who should eternally sing His praises. In the second, they would be saved by Himself, they would be purchased at that "great price" which He alone could pay. Yes, this was one of the triumphant joys of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that He was the one and only Saviour. Long before, through the mouth of His Prophets, we hear Him exulting in His exclusive right to the title of "Saviour of men." In His Name the Prophet tells us that "there is no Saviour besides Me."¹ Twice again does He repeat the same: "A Just God and a Saviour, there is none besides Me."² "There is no Saviour besides Me."³

The work which He had to accomplish as Saviour was ever before Him, and the vision which it presented to His eye of the vastness of the undertaking and the difficulty attending it, brought its own reward in the exuberant joy which flooded His Sacred Heart at the sight. "Behold thy Saviour cometh; His reward is with Him, and His work before Him."⁴ He exulted in the ampleness of the redemption by which He was to purchase our souls—"with Him is plenteous redemption;" and in its completeness also, which was to impart even to His word of sorrow amid the torments of the Cross an undertone of triumphant joy, when He cried out with a loud voice: "It is consummated."⁵ The acceptance moreover by the Father of His work of redemption, as clearly indicated in the mystery of His Resurrection, was an abiding joy within His Soul, and

¹ Isaiah xliii. 11.² Isaiah xlv. 21.³ Osee xiii. 4.⁴ Isaiah lxii. 11.⁵ St. John xix. 30.

filled His mind with the foresight of all that glory which He should procure thereby to His Father throughout all eternity. The vision therefore of His Passion entering, as it did, so integrally into the Divine plan of man's redemption, was a perpetual incentive to the rejoicing of our Lord. The anticipation of every torment that was to be inflicted upon His Body, of every inward pang, of every sense of the shame and humiliation to which He had resolved to subject Himself, was a constant renewal of His secret satisfaction amid the many hidden years of silent sorrow during which the love which burned within Him suffered so painful a restraint. His eye looked forward to the generations that should succeed, His ear listened to the triumphant strains which, through age after age, His Church would take up, proclaiming far and wide to every race and nation the superabundant completeness of the redemption which He had wrought, seeing that His salvation should have no end. "But My salvation shall be for ever, and My justice shall not fail." This "joy everlasting shall be upon the heads" of the redeemed. "And now they that are redeemed by the Lord shall return and shall come into Zion singing praises. They shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning shall flee away."¹

Again, our Lord rejoiced that He had already become by anticipation, and would continue to be until the end of all earthly trials for man, a source of consolation to the sorrowful. He saw already the mourners and afflicted of every age hastening to the wound of His Sacred Heart, that thence they might draw the sympathy and comfort elsewhere denied them, and thus unconsciously fulfil the words of our Lord by His

¹ - Isaiah li. 6, 11.

Prophet: "I, I Myself will comfort you."¹ Once more, He beheld the countless generations for whom He should be an ever-flowing fountain of holiness, souls who would cleave to Him, and reject for love of Him all that this world could offer, who, in order to be nearer to Him and resemble Him more closely, would choose the rough hard ways of the Cross. He heard beforehand the secret aspirations which His Holy Spirit should form within their hearts. He witnessed their silent acts of love and fidelity to Himself; and all these ever combined to make sweet melody in His ear, and soothe the sorrows of His life. In short, there was not a single contribution on His part to the glory of His Heavenly Father, or to the salvation of souls, that did not prove a source of distinct and blessed joy to His Humanity; so that when, even in the beginning, the angelic host sang above the slopes of Bethlehem their inspired song of triumph: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good-will," the Heart of the new-born Babe rejoiced in the foreknowledge of the means and of the cost at which that glory and that peace were to be purchased.

The Gospel narrative supplies us with many instances in which our Lord distinctly expresses the joy which filled His Soul when preparing His disciples for the performance of some great miracle. Thus, in the case of the stupendous miracle of the raising of Lazarus, He expresses Himself as "glad for their sakes that He was not there," the interior motive of His remark being that otherwise they would have lost the opportunity of increasing their faith, at the sight of one coming forth from the tomb who had been already dead four days. This His joy was again manifested at

¹ Isaiah li. 12.

the moment before the miracle was performed, and instigated the thanks which He so solemnly offered to His Heavenly Father in the hearing of those around, whereby He rejoiced in the share which His Sacred Humanity could claim in the operation of the Divine works.¹ The miracles wrought by our Lord were truly Divine works performed through His own inherent power as Eternal Son of God, One in Nature and operation with the Father. But, inasmuch as these works were wrought through the instrumentality of His Human Nature, He rejoiced as Man also in this power which He possessed because of His union with the Word. So pure, however, was this joy that it looked only to the glory of the Father, and had it been possible to refuse to His Humanity the power of working Divine marvels, our Lord would have found equal joy in renouncing it in order that His Father might be all the more glorified, since His will knew no joy save in that which promoted the honour and glory of the Father Who sent Him. The doing of that Father's will, and so repairing the outrage of His glory caused by the sins of men, entered into the same motive of joy; and when He saw that the fulfilment of this will brought Him only trouble, sorrow, and pain, then the unuttered song of His interior exultation that by these sufferings He could attain the desired end of His Mission here below pierced higher and higher to Heaven, and breathed such music into the Father's ear as earth had never before given birth to.

Ere the Incarnate Word had walked upon earth joy in sorrow was a sentiment unknown amongst men, but in Him new fountains of gladness were opened for

¹ St. John xi. 41, 42.

all such as should through grace and love be conformed to His likeness. Thenceforth would be heard, as echoed from a million souls, the cry of the great heart of the Apostle Paul: "We superabound with joy in all our tribulations."¹ The love of the Father and a tender love of souls became one of the blessed fruits of the Incarnation, which was to transform men into generous lovers of the Cross, fixing their eyes upon the halo of surpassing beauty which now surrounded it. Hitherto indeed we have heard tones of sorrow side by side with hymns of joy, accents of sublime resignation, and acknowledgment of God's just claims to the submission of His creatures. But the strains of joy and sorrow scarcely mingled harmoniously together in one same melody, until the mystery of the Cross unfolded to us new harmonies learnt from the sorrows and the joys of the Incarnate Word. Next to our Lord Himself, His Ever Blessed Mother has revealed to us in all its perfection the secret of rejoicing in sorrow, as an essential fruit of the grace of the new Kingdom, seeing that it is a law and necessary outcome of love. We may be assured that Mary's *Magnificat* was sung in her heart with ardour increased a thousand-fold, when she stood beneath the Cross and rejoiced for the share that had been given her in the sorrows of her Son. It was the express desire of our Lord that His joy should be communicated to His members, for this He clearly manifests when pouring out His Heart to His Apostles in the discourse after the Last Supper. "I have spoken these things to you," He said, "that My joy may be in you." He had previously told them how this was to be accomplished, namely, by union with Himself, whereby His mind and His Heart should dwell in them. He

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 4.

had said to them: "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you;" and then He added: "Abide in My love." He bade them also "Abide in Me, and I in you."¹ Here then was unlocked for them, as for all of us, the secret of that joy with which our Lord desired we should be filled. Nay, so exceedingly anxious was He that all might appreciate the true nature of the joy wherewith those should be replenished whose hearts were conformed to His, that, besides revealing it to His Apostles, He spoke of it in parables to the multitude round about Him, and spoke with such clearness of instruction that any one who had "ears to hear" could not fail to understand Him. When also the end drew near, in the opening words of the sublime prayer uttered aloud by Him in the presence of His Apostles the night before His Passion He characterized the hour of His supreme suffering as the hour of His glory. The hour had come, He said, the hour of the fullest joy of His Heart, for it was that in which He was to glorify His Father supremely, to purchase man's redemption by the shedding of His Blood, and to give the fullest testimony possible, even for Him to give, of His love for His Father and for men.

The fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel contains a series of parables wherein our Lord clearly discloses, in figurative language, the joy of His own Heart in the conversion and salvation of sinners. First, He reveals how full His mind is of His own character of the Good Shepherd, under which image He so truly loves to represent Himself. He depicts the joy of the shepherd when he has found the lost sheep, and his still greater joy when, disentangling it from the briars amidst which it has fallen, he places it on his shoulders and carries it

¹ St. John xv. 4, 9, 11.

to the fold. Finally, He gives vent to the fulness of His joy by describing how the shepherd calls together his friends and neighbours, bidding them rejoice with him. After the same truth has been unfolded under the figure of the recovered groat, and in the joy of the angels over one repentant sinner, there follows the beautiful Parable of the Prodigal, containing so many details of the father's joy on the return of his long-lost son, and concluding with the general rejoicing of the whole household. We may be readily assured that on innumerable other occasions our Lord must have spoken after the same manner, and allowed no opportunity to escape of making known to all who approached Him the joy which He felt in the return and repentance of sinners.

Before concluding our subject one joy remains to be considered, as experienced by our Lord in presence of the beautiful works of nature. We are told in the Book of Genesis that God, when contemplating the finished work of creation, saw that it was "very good," by which we are given to understand that He rejoiced in His works as the Creator alone can. In the joy of that Sabbath morn, at the beginning of the world's history, our Lord had His share as God; but He shared in it likewise as Man, for He knew by experience the joy of the human soul in all its perfection, when beholding the works of God. Herein we must carefully distinguish between joy and enjoyment. We know that our Lord never sought any other pleasure upon earth than that of doing His Father's will, for this was, as He Himself tells us, His daily nourishment.¹ Thus, He rejoiced in the works which He and the Father had conjointly called forth

¹ St. John iv. 34.

out of nothing and fashioned, simply because of their full accordance with the Divine will, and their fruitfulness in promoting the honour and glory of His Father. The beautiful objects in which this world abounds were indeed for Him no new revelation of the perfection of His Father's work, since all things lay open before His beatific vision. But not the less did they furnish Him, as Man, with an experimental knowledge which brought the purest joy to His human Heart—the joy springing from the contemplation of the beauty and the love of God as displayed in His works. At the same time, they presented to the human eyes of God Incarnate an abiding reflection of the loveliness of the Divinity, Whose splendours, in its Essence, were ever unveiled before Him. It is true that the joy which our Lord drew from His acquired knowledge conferred on Him no new glory, but it was a new revelation to us of His interior beauty, and therefore formed an additional charm, attracting our human hearts to Himself. We may feel, while we are gazing on the fair scenes of earth, and while our hearts are being raised by them in the spirit of joy to the love of “things invisible,” that this sentiment of pure rejoicing in created beauty has first been sanctified in the Heart of God Incarnate. As His eye wandered from the heights of Olivet over the vast expanse of country stretching out before Him, and blending with the distant horizon; or as it traversed the blue waters of Genesareth, whence the gentle breeze came and fanned His cheek, surely His Heart echoed the words of the Creator in the beginning, that it was “very good,” and His human Soul was filled to overflowing with a joy both human and Divine. As, then, we are certain that our Lord rejoiced in nothing that did not tend to the honour and glory of His Father,

we may conclude that joy felt in viewing the works of God, as revelations of the perfections which furnish us with the means of knowing and loving Him, is highly pleasing to Him, and nourishes the spirit of praise within our hearts. Such is that joy filling the soul of the "spiritual man," and mentioned by St. Paul, as distinct from the empty gratification and dismal enjoyments of the "sensual man," who seeks in the works of God but his own satisfaction, without respect to the Divine honour and glory.¹

Even now we feel that our subject is inexhaustible, for as the heart knows its own bitterness—and this most truly did the Heart of Jesus, and as no stranger can penetrate the sources of its joy, so were there depths of joy in the human Soul of the Incarnate Word, the variety and intensity of which can be made known to us only in the life to come. It simply remains for us reverently to form our conjectures regarding them, based on the truths which faith enumerates amongst the marvellous results of the Hypostatic Union. Some distant conception of the measure of that abiding joy, which was one of the beautiful features in the character of our Blessed Lord, may be gained from our knowledge of the perfection of His Soul. Joy, we know, is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and in proportion to the measure of His indwelling in the soul, will the spirit of holy rejoicing reside there. In Jesus, therefore, into Whose Soul the Spirit was poured "without measure," in Whom the gifts of the Spirit resided in all their plenitude and perfection, it is manifest that joy, as well as every other fruit of that blessed Spirit, must necessarily have abided in a measure unknown to any other human being. In addition to this, our Lord's

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

unapproachable sanctity opened in His Soul fountains of joy beyond the experience of even the highest among the saints—fountains which yielded forth such a full tide of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to the Father as will form, when we come hereafter to the full knowledge of it, a special joy and beatitude to our souls. From the appreciation of it which we can form even in this present state we may well be glad and “make melody in our hearts to God,” to think that so great and spiritual joy and heavenly blessedness have dwelt upon this earth, and that the strains of such a perpetual hymn of praise were for three-and-thirty years borne upwards from this lower world to gladden the Father’s ear. Remains of it are still left in the souls of those who, by conformity to “the mind of Christ,” and by union with His Sacred Heart, have begun even here on earth to “enter into the joy of their Lord,” and thus reproduce in themselves, however faintly, the marks and characteristics of His beauty.

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS PREDILECTIONS.

If you had known Me, you would without doubt have known My Father also (St. John xiv. 7).

THE inner life of our Blessed Lord was doubtless hid in God His Father, and yet the words spoken by Him, the actions wrought by Him, and the confidences into which, from time to time, He entered with His Apostles, and through them with us, have disclosed much of the interior beauty that would otherwise have been veiled from our eyes.

Now, we learn the inclinations of a man not only, nor indeed so much, from his words or his actions, as from the predilections which he unconsciously reveals. These predilections impart to his character and to his whole being those distinctive marks by which He is known and in due proportion appreciated. Thus was it with the human character of our Divine Lord, by means of which He brought us into contact with the mind of His Eternal Father, at the very time that He was drawing to Himself the hearts of men, through the attractive graciousness of His Person. The Divine predilections of the Son of God before His Incarnation have already been sufficiently considered, when speaking of the descent of the Word to take flesh in a human Mother—an act of self-annihilation whereby He

was enabled to glorify His Father in a state of humiliation, poverty, and suffering. Such were the charms which attracted Him from the Father's bosom, because there they were impossible, whereas earth afforded Him opportunities of practising them in ample abundance. Yet it is not with these we have at present to do, but with the human predilections of our Lord as He walked amongst men, and revealed to them the character of their Father Who is in Heaven.

Foremost among the special predilections in our Lord's human Soul is His remarkable love for the simple and the innocent. Twice in the Gospel of St. Matthew, twice in that of St. Mark, and twice also in St. Luke, we find recorded the great attraction of our Blessed Lord towards little children. He chose them as the models upon which His Apostles were to form their character, and not only did He point them out for imitation, He made it evident He loved them for their own sake, and because of the delight which He took in their simple innocence. We have but to reflect upon the characteristics of childhood, in order to comprehend how attractive that state must have been to our Lord. For instance, He, Who was truth itself, must have found great relief and repose of mind in watching the guilelessness of little children, after His sad experience of the falsehood and duplicity of men. He, Who was Infinite Purity, must have dwelt with especial complacency on the simplicity He saw in their innocent souls, reflecting as in a clear mirror, with all the fidelity and distinction possible in a fallen nature, the purity of Him Who had created them, and Whose image as yet remained in them unsullied. Our knowledge of the Heart of Jesus, and of the hearts of men in general, should teach us that another characteristic of

childhood, possessing perhaps even stronger claims upon Him, lay in its unsuspecting confidence and trust. Who has ever looked down into the clear trusting gaze of a little child's eye, as it meets our own with no shadow of a thought that its confidence could be misplaced, or who has felt the tiny hand laid in ours that we may lead its owner whithersoever we will, without the faintest doubt in its young mind as to the entire rectitude of our guidance? Who has done this, and has not felt so impressed with the engaging beauty of childhood, that his heart beats in unison with the gently breathed invitation: "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me." If our hearts, sullied as they are by sin and selfishness and contact with the world, can enter into this feeling, how much more must not the most loving of all hearts have done the same—the Heart of Him Who is ever vanquished by confidence, and in Whom no man ever trusted and was confounded.

Every detail contained in the Gospel narrative brings out fresh points in the tenderness with which our Lord regarded little children. He not only speaks of them to His Apostles, but He calls them to Him. He sets them "by Him."¹ He places them "in the midst of the Apostles."² He would have His disciples not only study the model for themselves, but witness also and appreciate the tenderness with which He, their Master, looked upon those little ones. Moreover, on one occasion, before drawing the attention of His disciples to a particular child, we are distinctly told that He Himself "embraced him."³ An action like this was in no way a necessary accompaniment to the instruction about to be given, and may therefore be taken as the

St. Luke ix. 47.

² St. Matt. xviii. 2.

³ St. Mark ix. 35.

outward expression of our Lord's interior predilection for the innocence and simplicity of childhood. At other times, when children were presented to Jesus, and the disciples, murmuring against those who brought them, sought to send them away, He "was much displeased," and pleaded that the little ones should not be prevented from coming to Him. Again we are told: "He embraced them, and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them."¹ In truth, He never suffered them to leave Him without extending to them the like marks of special affection.

Another class of persons, who tacitly appealed to the special love of the Heart of Jesus, were such as felt within themselves some yearning after the attainment of a higher spirituality, devout souls who aspired, by embracing the counsels of perfection, to follow Him more closely and intimately than the simple observance of the Commandments required of them. These must ever be very dear to our Lord, and His Heart must have inclined towards them, even when He foresaw that poor weak human nature would gain the final mastery in the struggle, and His own love be defeated. Such a one was he of whom the Gospel narrates that he appeared to have felt a kind of disappointment, when our Lord demanded no more from him than the faithful observance of the Commandments. For he wistfully replied: "All these things I have observed from my youth," implying his desire to aim after some higher reward. How quickly did our Lord respond by offering him the most precious gift He could bestow, a vocation to follow Him in the Evangelical virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience, "looking on Him and loving Him all the while."² Although, as we have

¹ St. Mark x. 14, 16.

² St. Mark x. 20, 21.

already considered, the young man rejected this offer and went away to return no more, yet he awakened a feeling of deep sadness in the breast of our Lord, for he had been the object of especial predilection to the Heart of God Incarnate, and the recipient of a Divine vocation; as also have been all those whom Jesus has regarded with that same look of a loving preference.

No one can be at all acquainted with the history of our Lord's life, without recognizing the extreme kindness and compassion which He ever showed towards the suffering and the afflicted. Not to dwell here on the individual acts by which our Blessed Lord manifested this tendency of His compassion, let it suffice to record both His unfailing readiness to assist even the most humble who were in need of help, and likewise that very marked predilection which rendered Him so prompt and keen in the manifestation of His sympathy. This is a point which would probably escape the notice of those who have not thoroughly familiarized themselves with the character of our Lord, but it reveals itself clearly to such persons as have habitually, and in the spirit of prayer, studied His actions and motives, and have learnt to read in them the beauty of His interior Soul. Nor was it the sick and suffering alone who won over the sympathies of our Lord's Heart, but all who were, in any way, or to any degree, subject to humiliation, blame, or the censure of unamiable and even uncongenial spirits. Had our Lord lived upon earth in these days, we should beyond a doubt have observed Him seeking out the unsuccessful candidates in some examination upon which their future interests greatly depended, consoling and encouraging them under their serious disappointment. At another time, we should find Him watching over with special concern

and doing all He could to comfort those young people who are sometimes passed over and slighted in school life, and whose mental powers require, perhaps, particular care and discernment in rendering the help necessary for their development, and who for lack of these end in despair and failure. Again, do we not feel sure that He would have singled out, with earnest and quickly-seeing eyes, the hearts that quiver, like the sensitive plant, through dread of ridicule or scorn from companions of shallow mind, and a mean and sordid nature? With such hearts their over-sensitiveness is the cause alike of their sufferings and of their faults, but their very timidity and helplessness appeal powerfully to the delicate sympathy of the Heart of Jesus. Were our Lord still on earth, we should behold Him searching out those who are pursued by the world's calumny, and identifying Himself with their cause. Nay, even where some blame was due, would He not as of old condemn the zeal of censorious friends? Once more, we might be sure to find Jesus withdrawing from the busy crowd, in order that, in by-ways, He might discover those upon whom society looks coldly in retribution for their misfortunes. In a word, the neglected, the despised, the misunderstood, no less than the sick, and those who have grave cause to mourn, would still, according to His wont, be selected by our Lord as especially deserving of predilection.

Let us now draw from the inspired page some instances wherein our Lord invariably manifested a singular interest in persons whom the world had banished from her society, or whom their fellow-men had marked out for public reproof. Thus, in the case of the man born blind, our Lord, having heard that the Pharisees reviled Him and had cast Him out of

their synagogue, took pains to seek him, as the Sacred Text plainly intimates, for it says that our Lord "found him" and revealed His Divinity to him—a grace which his accusers had failed to obtain, by reason of the pride that blinded them.¹ St. Mark tells us of another blind man, who called earnestly upon our Divine Lord when he learned that He was passing by, and who, on being loudly rebuked by those around him, succeeded in attracting the attention of Jesus, so that He paused on the road, obliging the whole company present to do the same, and commanded the man to be brought that He might have speech with him, and grant his request.² Again, at the Pool of Probatica, our Lord chose, as the object upon whom He would exercise His power and mercy, a man who had been during eight-and-thirty years waiting for a cure, and whose infirmity had, over and over again, prevented him from descending at the proper moment into the water, having "no man" to assist him. After the miracle had been wrought, and the man had been accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath-day in taking up his bed and carrying it home, our Lord sought for him in the Temple, and finding him, added to the corporal benefit already bestowed on him interior admonitions for the salvation of his soul.³ Many other acts, such as that of the defence of Magdalen, also of the woman taken in adultery, of the Samaritans on whom His disciples wished to call down fire from heaven to consume them, all give evidence of the same turning of our Lord's Heart in mercy towards the oppressed and unfortunate, and are events too well known to detain us now. They are but a few examples, amongst innumerable others that might have been given, but

¹ St. John ix. 34.² St. Mark x. 46.³ St. John v. 2—14.

they are sufficient to make it manifest with what persons and in what directions the predilections of Jesus lay. In respect of the suffering, those namely who have been stricken by God with affliction, either of the soul or of the body, we can again have no true knowledge of our Lord without seeing proofs of His great attraction towards them. We say advisedly attraction, to distinguish it from compassion. However beautiful this latter trait is, especially in the soul of Jesus, we are not speaking of it here.

We can readily understand the difference between that almost involuntary compassion which we cannot help feeling for suffering when we witness it, and that disposition of mind, so much higher and so much rarer, which owns by anticipation a positive attraction in favour of all who are in affliction. The former of these degrees can number its thousands. Very few persons, we believe, can lay claim to the latter, for it is a supernatural instinct, nurtured in us solely through a constant and intimate union with the spirit of the Cross and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was His own thirst for suffering which brought our Lord down from Heaven, and, wherever He recognized suffering upon earth, He found in it the foreshadowing of that treasure which He sought, and was ready to clasp within His embrace. The poor lepers, before whose approach their fellow-men fled in abhorrence and fear, possessed attractions for the Heart of Jesus, Who sought them out in their pitiful isolation, and touched their sores with His gently healing hand. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the sick of whatever infirmity, presented in their very afflictions a fascination before the eyes of Jesus, which inevitably drew Him to their side. The voice of their mourning sounded like plaintive

music in His ear, urging Him to come and lay His salve on their bruised hearts. But, stronger than any other was His predilection for publicans and sinners. He had looked down from Heaven upon an earth crushed beneath the weight of malediction, and He had viewed the whole human race as one immense family, cemented together through affliction. Still in that family great differences existed. A terrible curse, it is true, rested upon all alike, but, besides this general misfortune, individual members were stained with divers spiritual maladies, some greater, some less. Amongst these His Divine ingenuity singled out from afar the souls who presented the saddest aspect of all. This striking fact meets with constant confirmation in the pages of the holy Gospel. St. Matthew records our Lord's declaration: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners."¹

He does not deny that He had come for the salvation of all, but He asserts that sinners, in the full sense of the word, held the largest claim upon Him, and that the desire to win the love and confidence of such constituted the special yearning of His Sacred Heart. Finally, though He acknowledged that it was to the sheep of the house of Israel He was sent in the first instance, taking care even then to dwell with a loving sympathy on the epithet of "lost sheep," He at the same time discloses the strong yearning of His Heart to possess the Gentiles, also scattered, as they were, over the universe "like sheep without a shepherd." It is for this double harvest of neglected far-away souls that He pleaded with His disciples, bidding them "pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest," for that "indeed it was great, and the labourers but few."² Would He not now

¹ St. Matt. ix. 13.

² St. Matt. ix. 37, 38.

plead with us, exactly after the same manner, for the poor benighted heathen who are stretching out their hands from afar towards us, because they are perishing for the bread of life, whilst thousands at home in the Father's house abound with that bread, of which, alas ! they care not to partake.

The narratives of the Gospel which awaken our sympathy most powerfully are such as describe the peculiar predilection of our Lord for those sinners whom He sought with the greatest sacrifice to Himself, went out of His way to find, defended against every attack, and at length, after their true repentance, spent and exhausted Himself that He might fill them with consolation, and delighted in showering down into their souls His choicest favours. So marked was His attraction for such, that He must needs have them even amongst the little band of His Apostles ; yea, must choose for their head, and for His first visible representative on earth, one who was a penitent, whose soul had been cleansed in the fires of humiliation and remorse, and whose head had been bowed in penitential shame and sorrow. St. Matthew, the publican, too, specially numbered amongst sinners, and sneered at by the Pharisees, was amongst the favoured ones of Jesus. St. Paul, the former persecutor of the infant Church, the accomplice in the martyrdom of Stephen, was raised to be the chosen "vessel of election" who should carry the truths of the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles, and to be himself "caught up into Paradise, that there he might hear secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter."

The history of succeeding ages, were they revealed, would but disclose the same marvellous predilection of our Lord for those who, through no grievous sin of

theirs, are, more than all others, despised by men. As it was the misfortunes of the great human family that drew Jesus down from Heaven, so the most unfortunate, the most tried among the members of that family, have ever been, will ever be, those towards whom the beautiful Soul of Jesus inclined with His most marked and tender predilection. There are thousands in this world whom we little suspect to be objects of especial love and anxiety to that Heart, so human in its instincts, and withal so Divine in the calm of its self-possession. We hear, perhaps, their names read out—men whom society has cast off, for whom temptation has been by reason of their own unfaithfulness too strong, or who, from poverty and unsucccess and ultimate recklessness, have dropped out of their own sphere, and have been lost among the general crowd, that great nameless multitude amidst whom they sink into oblivion, save in the thought of one Whose eye follows them, and Whose Heart yearns over them in pity rather than in blame. We pass such men in the streets, souls on whom Jesus has looked and loved, even while they saddened Him by their refusal to render up the “one thing” which He demanded, and which would have made them His own for ever.

Nor may we leave out the classes of the misunderstood, the depreciated, and those who are struggling with a poverty they dare not allow to see the light; or who, through misdirection or ill-advice, or perchance their own folly, have missed their aim in life, and are perishing in the desert. All such as these may cross our path without our knowing it. Surely we have in this another and a powerful motive for looking with reverence on our brethren, be they who or what they

may—we know not; but this is true, they have been, nay, are perhaps even now, the objects of the special predilection of Jesus.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS AVERSIONS.

You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world (St. John viii. 23).

So associated in our minds is the idea of aversion with the taint of human passion and prejudice, that it might at first sight appear both incongruous and unbecoming to suppose our Lord in any way capable of manifesting it. And yet a little reflection will prove to us that not only in human nature the most perfect, but also in the Divine Nature itself, by reason of their very perfection, certain aversions do and ought to exist. Thus the infinite purity of God renders it necessary that He should abhor even the least shadow of sin. Now, amongst the various kinds of sin there are some that cannot fail to be the peculiar objects of His aversion, because, in their spirit of hatred against God, they all the more directly and maliciously assail His Divine Majesty. Our frequent mistake lies in not distinguishing between sin and the sinner. But God, Who cannot avoid having an inherent aversion for sin, is still the "God Who loveth souls," inasmuch as He hateth none of the things which He hath made; and sin He has not made.¹

As then, by the predilections manifested in His

¹ Wisdom xi. 25, 27.

Sacred Humanity our Lord revealed to us, at one and the same time, the true character of His Father, and the beauty of His own human Soul, so by the aversions which He entertained did He make to us a similar revelation, no less pregnant with instruction, warning, and gentle admonition. The words addressed by our Lord to the Jews, which are prefixed to the head of this chapter, will explain to us the nature and the cause of our Lord's aversions, and they will likewise illustrate the beauty of the Soul wherein they were formed. Jesus had been occupied in justifying His doctrine, and asserting His oneness with the Father. The Jews hardened their hearts against Him, wherefore He told them they should die in their sins because of their unbelief, adding that whither He was about to go they could not follow. After this He went on to explain to them the source of all the evils which should befall them: "You are from beneath," He said, "I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world." Herein lies the whole root of the particular aversion our Divine Lord felt for the sin of the rulers and Pharisees. He told them elsewhere that they were of their father, the devil, whose desires they fulfilled, and who was a liar; hence the words of truth they would not hear, because they were not of God.¹ What alliance, then, what union of sentiment, could exist between truth and falsehood, between God and Belial, between light and darkness?

But, it may be asked, what could there be in common between our Divine Lord and any sinner, since all sin is only falsehood and darkness and impurity, in some kind and degree or other? True, we reply, but in those whom our Lord now addressed there was,

¹ St. John viii. 44—47.

besides, hatred of the truth and a deliberate determination to resist it, for "they sought their glory one from another, while the glory which is from God alone they did not seek."¹ Such is our Lord's own explanation of the gulf that lay between Him and these self-seekers. How could He, Who received no glory from men, have anything in common with those worldlings, whose ignoble aspirations could never rise above some material advantage which they coveted? They formed the type of our modern politicians in private life—of men and women who are swayed by motives of policy in their ordinary dealings and relations with others, whose words and actions are guided by principles of self-interest, who restrain the expression of approval or blame where really due, in proportion as such expressions are likely to advance or retard their own promotion to power. Those to whom our Lord spoke the severe words quoted above were types, once more, of modern place-hunters in the world and in the sanctuary—men who with obstinate infatuation barter their soul's freedom, the best instincts of their conscience, and, should the bitter end be reached, the hope of an eternal Kingdom, for a coveted place, for a paltry favour from those in power, for popularity with a party—men, in a word, who seek "their glory from one another, and not the glory which is from God alone." With such as these our Lord could have no sentiment in common. Their deliberate self-seeking, their gross preference of Cæsar to God, struck at the very root of any possible alliance between Himself and them.

Other souls there were guilty indeed of sins more visible to the world's eye, and more shocking to its sense of propriety, who yet did not awaken in our

¹ St. John v. 44.

Lord the aversion of which we have spoken. These men were sinners because, perhaps, from childhood they had lived in the very atmosphere of sin, and had never been brought into contact with any sanctifying influence. They could only dimly discern between good and evil, and had never recognized the malice of sin, even if they had given their thoughts to the question at all. For such as these our Lord bore, as we know, only the tenderest compassion. In them was, beyond doubt, much that grievously offended His infinite purity, but there was not found in their benighted souls that distinctive "sin of the world," a cold-blooded, unbelieving, and unchanging policy, which makes everything subservient to selfish, material interests, excluding all thought of, or care for, God's honour and glory. It was this "sin of the world," spoken of by St. John, that our Lord came to take away; it imports us therefore to ascertain clearly in what this sin consists.¹ Its chief malice lies in the fact of its being a deliberate turning away of the heart from God to the creature, and to self, which it prefers to Him; and in proportion as this turning away of the soul from the legitimate object of its allegiance is persevered in, with design and determination, so is it abhorrent to the Divine Being Who "made all things for His glory." Now, Jesus came to turn back the hearts of men to His Father, and to take away the sin of the world; but where He found them hardened in their egotism, firmly resolved to resist the truth rather than relinquish one human idol, pandering to the weaknesses and passions of each other for the sake of power and the glory they received from one another, there His truth, His equity, His love of the Father—in brief, all the grandeurs of His Soul, caused

¹ St. John i. 29.

in Him that aversion which others, stained with foulest sins, did not evoke. It is this that He testifies by the language which He employed, and by His whole manner of dealing with the several classes we have described.

Let it, however, never be forgotten that our Lord manifested a special aversion for the class of sin conspicuous in the Scribes and Pharisees, and the rulers of the people; yet even for them His Heart yearned unto the end with a yearning rendered all the more poignant by the severity of the language which He used, and the judgments He pronounced against them. We are sometimes almost startled at the sternness of the epithets which He applied to them, He Whose character was so gentle, He Whom we are justly wont to regard as so refined and so sensitive. Yet after all, His aversions, as well as the language and manner in which He clothed them, were but the reproduction of those which God had pronounced of old by the mouth of His holy Prophets, and we know full well that the "abomination" which the idolatry of His faithless people was to Him, owed its origin to the excess of His outraged love. Not the less do we desire to keep very clearly before our mind the evidence that we have of our Lord's special aversion for the petty ambition, the shifting policy, the jealousy, the thirst after Cæsar's favour, and the high price set on the possession of the mammon of this world, which formed the besetting sins of those whom He denounces as "hypocrites," as "whited sepulchres," fair in appearance to the outward view of men, "but within full of dead men's bones and all filthiness," as "serpents, a generation of vipers," "blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."¹ Such language as this was not usual with

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 23—28.

our Lord, nay rather, it was strange to Him, and therefore denoted an extraordinary abhorrence of the serious blots and blemishes of character which called it forth.

The qualities He denounced stood out in marked contrast to that truthfulness which sought but His Father's glory, and illuminated His Soul with so pure and transparent a beauty, and to that simplicity in Him which held in such deep, unforgiving abhorrence, any shadow of falsehood and duplicity. Other souls, though deeply dyed in sin, never had such words addressed to them as those we have just quoted. Our Lord turned in mercy towards men from whom the Pharisees in their proud self-righteousness shrank with contempt. To them He never would have applied the reproachful term "fox," which He gave to that petty Prince Herod, styled King of Judea, whom a craven fear of the Roman Emperor made so despicable a sycophant. Jesus, of deliberate purpose and design, chose for him a title that should best express His antipathy against the sinister schemes into which his self-interested policy led the man.¹ As jealousy is a vice peculiarly opposed to all nobility or elevation of soul, it could not be otherwise than an object of special aversion to the Soul of our Divine Lord. We find Him therefore pursuing it with His hatred, not merely in the vilest and most repulsive form which it assumed among the class of persons above referred to, but even in those milder aspects under which it presented itself amongst His own disciples. This outspoken aversion will enable us to draw the more clearly a due distinction between the sinner and his sin, between imperfection in itself and the soul wherein it resides; for certain it is that, if our Lord had detected in any one of His most

¹ St. Luke xiii. 32.

favoured and holy servants the slightest trace of the foul leprosy of jealousy, of petty ambition, or any of those vices which we know to have been the objects of His special aversion, He would assuredly have pursued it most ruthlessly, and would never have assuaged His purging fire until every smallest vestige of it had been burned away.

Again, intemperate zeal, amounting in some souls to a positive vice, although in others it may be no more than an imperfection, was marked out by our Lord for express condemnation. It excited His anger for two reasons. In the first place, this kind of zeal was utterly opposed to His own long-suffering gentleness and mercy, which He designed to make leading characteristics of His holy spouse the Church, and stamped them as His own special seal and mark upon her theology. In the next place, His keen eye had penetrated into the secret springs that set such false and intemperate zeal in motion, and knew them to be injurious and unhealthy in principle. Thus the zeal of the Pharisees, of the scribes and rulers, drew its inspiration from the basest passions, from envy, jealousy, and ambition, in almost every instance in which it was directed against Himself. If they attacked His disciples, it was at Him that they secretly aimed. If they accused Him of breaches of the Law, and of transgressing the traditions of the ancients, they only endeavoured, by this means, to bring Him into disrepute with the people, and so destroy the influence which they held in such jealousy and fear. When they called Him the friend of sinners, or murmured at His answers in their defence, they still had the same unworthy object in view, although their spiritual pride in esteeming themselves just and despising others.

added fresh fuel to their zeal, and intensified its passionate heat.

There were, however, others whose zeal, untempered by the true Spirit of Love, elicited the condemnation of our Lord in terms which showed how distasteful it was to Him. Such were the disciples in whom He perceived traces of Jewish severity in their judgment upon sinners, and at once reproved them for it, both in His words and actions. When they, for instance, besought Him to send away the Syro-Phenician woman, "for she crieth after us," although our Lord delayed for a moment, in order to try her perseverance, and seemed about to yield, yet in the end, far from doing this, He granted her petition, and actually broke forth into admiration of her faith. So again when, as we have recently considered, the disciples wished to call down fire from heaven to destroy those who would not receive Him, He by the sharpness of His rebuke clearly testified how greatly such hasty zeal displeased Him. Or when He observed a somewhat similar spirit amongst the disciples in regard of one another, marking the indignation of the ten that James and John should have asked for the first places in His Kingdom, Jesus availed Himself of the opportunity for instructing them in the principles upon which that Kingdom was to be founded. He made it clear to them that the false and selfish zeal of the children of the world, which leads them to lord it over each other, should find no place amongst them, whose zeal must ever bear the impress of the sweetness of His own loving Heart. St. Peter, above the rest, frequently exposed himself to His Master's stern rebuke through his impetuous zeal. Although we must not confuse his impulsive ardour with the unloving zealousness of the

Pharisees, yet it was meet that he, who was to be the first visible Head of the Church that should spring forth from the loving Saviour's Heart and Side, he who was to be the common Father of all the faithful, he in whose hands were to be placed the keys of the Kingdom of love, should be made to recognize well the gulf that lies between the fiery justice of bigoted zealots, owning no principle of mercy, and that holy zeal, on the other side, which, though firm and staunch in its loyalty to the cause of God and of His truth, is not the less pervaded through and through with the tender compassion of Jesus. It was therefore a merciful thought of our Blessed Lord to manifest so clearly His aversions as well as His predilections, that all generations might learn of Him what to love and what legitimately to hate. Whilst such knowledge is a revelation of His interior loveliness, it discloses, at the same time, the treasures in Him of that loving-kindness towards the whole race of man whereon we should build our own confidence in Him and imitation of His example.

In addition to what has been said, we have only to study the connection between a man's actions and the character of his soul to understand how the perfection of the Soul of our Lord was, in itself, the cause of those aversions or dissatisfactions, which we are considering in the present chapter. Experience must have shown us that, in proportion as certain virtues or dispositions exist in the soul of a man, will be his sensitiveness to the opposite vices. Thus, one endowed with a remarkable gift of truthfulness in the unswerving singleness of his purpose, impatient of anything approaching to dissimulation with his fellow-men, in however slight a degree, such a man will be painfully

alive to the opposite qualities whenever they are forced upon his notice, and will feel himself utterly incapable of forming a genuine friendship with any one in whom they exist. The like happens in the case of those persons whose characters have received the stamp of some high quality in no ordinary degree, for their extreme sensitiveness on many points is equally unknown and unintelligible to others not so favoured. With our Blessed Lord it was somewhat similar, inasmuch as the sanctification of His Soul followed the same rules, or rather formed the model of those same principles in our sanctification, seeing that His was in every respect a human Soul. One very marked difference, however, must be acknowledged. In men, even those most advanced towards perfection, the rising up of a strong feeling against certain vices or dispositions is seldom, if ever, caused by their own simple immunity from those bad qualities, or by their possession of the opposite virtues. Invariably does something of nature, some imperfection lend its help to the effect, be it but a tinge of that mere natural repugnance which flows from refinement of sentiment, delicacy of perception, or intellectual culture.

In human aversions there lurks too another danger, that of its passing on from denouncing the vicious act to direct itself against the person who has committed it, or in whose soul the vice resides. Nor does man's aversion always restrain itself within just limits, but becomes at times a source of discord and disorder in the soul. Such imperfections are only the natural consequences of our fallen nature. But with Jesus, not one of those imperfections, so inseparable from our aversions, could find a resting-place. In Him was no sin, no shadow of sin. No taint of concupiscence

marred His Soul. Into His thoughts, or motives, or springs of action, could enter no discord, no disorder. He could abhor with an intense repulsion each particular vice, as in the case of the Pharisees; yet, all the while, the soul in which it found home remained ever an object of compassionate love to Him, and the reason of this was that in Him alone the bitterest of His aversions proceeded exclusively from the perfection and beauty of His human Soul allied to His Divinity.

CHAPTER XVII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS WORDS.

Never did man speak like this Man (St. John vii. 46).

It seems to have been a special mission committed to St. John, that he should gather up those Divine words of our Blessed Lord which the other Evangelists had not recorded. In fulfilment of this he commences his Gospel with the sublime passage so familiar to us all, declaring to men the Eternal Generation of the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Throughout His Gospel one thought appears to predominate in the mind of the Beloved Apostle, his desire to glorify his Divine Master through His words, making these convey the revelation of His Divinity. He enters at once on the eagle flight of contemplation, wherein he beholds the Eternally-spoken Word within the bosom of the Father. Afterwards, before closing the inspired testimony contained in his Gospel, we find him leaning on the breast of the Word Incarnate and drinking in the

language that speaks from heart to heart, as Jesus breathes His own Spirit of love into the soul of His Beloved Disciple. If we would trace to their true origin the words spoken by our Lord, we must mount upward to the heavenly courts above, and there listen to them as they spring forth from the first uncreated principle of all truth. The utterances of that Divine Word, as they have known no beginning, so neither shall they know an end. They are pronounced in the midst of the ineffable light and life that are in God, of the inaccessible glory surrounding the throne of the Eternal Trinity; and the fruit which they bear is the Love uniting the Three Divine Persons together in the mutual contemplation of their own perfections. God, however, so loved men, and so yearned to be loved by them in return, that He sent His Word upon earth to speak to them the language of Heaven, and teach them how to attain their true inheritance and home, wherein for all eternity they may hear and understand the utterances of the Divine Word in their first and highest source. God uttered the one Word He had spoken from everlasting, and that Word, having assumed our nature, first became visible to the eyes of men, and then, taking a human voice, spoke to their ears. As the Father, by the Divine intelligence, eternally produced His Word, so that Word Incarnate continued, in time, to make Himself known as God's own Word clothed in human language.

We are now in a position to understand more clearly the significance of the solemn words addressed by our Lord to the Jews: "But He that sent Me is true, and the things I have heard of Him, these same I speak in the world. As the Father hath taught Me, these things I speak. I speak that which I have seen with My

Father. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man Who have spoken the truth to you which I have heard of God. This Abraham did not."¹ Again He says: "He that believeth in Me, doth not believe in Me, but in Him that sent Me."² Our Lord is here claiming for His words that faith which the Eternally-spoken Word of God alone could claim. He is asserting His union with the Father, and the consequent unity of speech between them, as elsewhere He declares their unity of operation. He can speak no other than that which He has heard eternally in God. He can but clothe that truth in human language, in order to render the Divine utterances accessible to the human ear. If therefore they believe in Him, and in the word which He speaks in the world, they cannot help believing in Him Who sent Him, because these are one and indivisible. Recognizing then that the words of Jesus were Divine words, although clothed in human language, as He was Himself Divine, although veiled beneath a human form, what wonder is it that they breathed forth such power and unction, and were so radiant with a heavenly beauty that those who heard them were filled with astonishment and admiration. Truly, "never had man spoken as this Man." He alone used no borrowed words, for when He said His doctrine was not His, and that He spoke but what He was taught by the Father, He was only asserting the truth inherent in Himself as God, that truth which was His inalienable possession, as the Only-Begotten of the Father and His Everlasting Word. This neither Abraham nor any of the Patriarchs or Prophets could do. Neither could the Apostles, nor any one who should come after them. They could but pass on the word, which they had received by the

¹ St. John viii. 26, 28, 38, 40.² St. John xii. 44.

gratuitous gift of Him Who chose them from amongst men to make His own Divine truth known to the world. The especial beauty then of the words spoken by our Lord is to be traced back to their Divine principle, their Eternal source, which is in the bosom of the Father.

Let us here ask ourselves how, in order that He might accommodate Himself to our weakness, necessarily incapable of comprehending the Divine Word as it was eternally uttered in the dwelling-place of inaccessible light, He would clothe it with human language of incomparable force and beauty, and would, through the accents of a human voice, make it strike upon the ears of men and penetrate into their souls. Jesus, the Light of light, the Wisdom of the Father, Who could speak nothing save what He had received from the Father, and Whose words were therefore emanations from the Eternal mind of God, did nevertheless, in His Divine skill, form His speech with so great clearness and simplicity as to bring the most sublime truths within the reach of a people singularly gross and unlettered. While we listen to His accents, as He addresses Himself to different classes of persons who approach Him, we recognize in them the revelation of the riches of His adorable Soul, we mark the operation of the Holy Spirit within that blessed sanctuary, where He resides in all His plenitude; and we note how the Divine Counsel not merely guided our Lord when to be silent and when to speak, but also imparted to His words that precise character which always fitted them to be words of life and salvation to each of those who heard them. They were the outpouring of His piety towards His Heavenly Father in every point that could contribute to His glory. They were the outcome of

His knowledge of all things, whether human or Divine, the reflection of that wisdom by which He directed all things strongly and smoothly to their appointed end. They were borne on the overflowing torrent of His charity, and formed the song of His tranquil joy, the gently breathed assurance of the peace which He brought from Heaven, and an ever instructive manifestation of the patience in which He possessed His Soul. They reveal to us the sympathy of His human kindness, and are the ceaseless expression of His goodness. They lend a voice to the interior meekness of His Heart, and outward manifestation to the modesty wherewith His Soul was inwardly imbued.

Our Lord tells us Himself that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and that "a good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things."¹ Now, it was precisely owing to the perfect purity of our Lord's Heart, which led Him to seek by every word He uttered His Father's glory alone in the salvation of those whom He addressed, that besides the intrinsic beauty imparted to His words they were characterized by an unflinching suitableness to their object on every occasion. The better to illustrate our meaning, which is of no light importance in the consideration of our Lord's words, let us for a moment glance at the contrary imperfection so frequently marring the excellence of the words of ordinary men, and wholly destroying their efficacy. We often hear persons speaking upon moral and religious subjects with great clearness, and displaying in their observations a just appreciation of much that is according to right and reason, and is well pleasing to God. Unfortunately, however, words full of intrinsic truth are too frequently winged with the

¹ St. Matt. xii. 34, 35.

poisoned arrow of jealousy, personal dislike, or other kind of prejudice, so that any opportunity of doing good is missed. For instance, passages from spiritual or moral books may be quoted, sayings of some of the saints may be introduced, without such reference to the context as would show under what utterly different circumstances such words were originally spoken from those to which they are now applied; or how totally different was the character of the persons to whom, or concerning whom, they were uttered. These and the like incongruities result, for the most part, from want of purity of intention, and may be attributed to mean, or at least imperfect motives, which, as a canker at the root, strip them of all their efficacy by depriving them of their appropriateness. The various imperfections to be found in the utterances of men enable us to understand more clearly and accurately the cause of the fitness and perfection of every word spoken by our Lord. As in all that He wrought, so in all that He said, Jesus was "led by the Spirit," Whose action in His Soul has never been warped nor vitiated by the natural spirit in man. Every word or conception corresponded in most perfect harmony to the occasions in which He found Himself, and to the requirements of each person whom He addressed. This was because the harmony uniting each and all, both action and occasion, had distinct previous existence within His own blessed Soul, the inferior part of which was submissive to the superior; while the latter, in its turn, obeyed faithfully the Spirit of God Who replenished it. Hence His human will acted in union with the will of His Father, so that, in a word, His entire Human Nature, although distinct, acted throughout in the **most perfect harmony** with the Divine Nature.

A reproduction of all this wonderful accord we find in the history of the Church, ever guided as she is, like her Head and Founder, by the Spirit of the Divine wisdom which dwells within her. The words addressed by her to her children during the year have, in every case, their special signification, their especial fitness for each season and festival as it occurs. She is never at fault, never fails of the end she has in view, never proves inadequate to the design before her. Preachers may, and indeed must, draw from her teaching the subject-matter of their discourses; spiritual writers may comment upon the portions of Scripture which, season after season, or festival after festival, she reads in our hearing; and yet, however excellent and instructive these may be, some taint of human imperfection must ever be found mingled with them, some treatment that falls short of the sublime subject proposed for consideration. And why? Because, as man did never speak like the God-Man, so never will human voice speak as the Divine voice of the Church, His spouse, hath done.

The words which formed the utterances of our Lord during His sojourn upon earth might fairly be divided into several classes, and noticed under special heads. But, as this would be far too detailed and comprehensive for our present plan, being fruitful enough to supply matter for a separate volume, we must confine ourselves within narrower limits. And this we can all the more easily do, when we remember how many of the blessed words spoken by Jesus have been already considered by us, in the course of the preceding pages. Neither shall we dwell upon those sayings that belong naturally to subsequent chapters. The very few words recorded as addressed to His Heavenly Father have

generally taken the form of prayer or thanksgiving, in which light they do not find place in our present subject, and were, moreover, for the most part spoken towards the close of His mortal life. The sacred utterances of Jesus which remain were addressed either to His own immediate disciples, to the multitude, to certain individuals with whom He had more or less particular relations, or, in the last place, to His avowed enemies and persecutors. That they should have possessed a marvellous influence over those who knew our Lord the best; that, whether they were words of overflowing tenderness and confidence, such as He spoke to His Apostles on the night before His Passion, or were couched in the accents of censure and reproach, they should each and all have touched the hearts of men as with a charm, drawing them closer and closer to Himself, is not surprising. Their faith in His Divinity and their appreciation of the beauty of His Humanity were daily increasing, and in proportion His language wore for them an ever-growing fulness of significance and power. Nothing, however, more strikingly reveals the Divine force and loveliness of the words of Jesus than the effect they produced upon the multitude, or upon those particular persons in it who had not been brought into any intimate relations with Him. Of this character were those who, on hearing His words, exclaimed: "This is the Prophet indeed," and others: "This is the Christ."¹ Such also were the messengers sent to apprehend Him, who to the question of the Pharisees, why they had not brought *l.m.*, could give no other explanation than the significant reply: "Never did man speak like this Man," and who thus called down upon

¹ St. John vii. 40, 41.

themselves the contemptuous rejoinder: "Are you also seduced?"

It was due solely to the heavenly eloquence and unction of His words, made more impressive by the authority with which He uttered them, that after His Sermon on the Mount "great multitudes followed Him." Was He observed seated by the sea-shore, again "great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went up into a boat and sat down," whilst so large was the crowd that "all the multitude stood on the shore" to hear Him, because His words had rung throughout the whole country side.¹ When, on another occasion, He retired into a desert place at news of the death of St. John the Baptist, the people, having heard of His departure, "followed Him on foot out of the cities."² In truth, so ravished were they by His words of heavenly teaching that they became entirely unmindful of their corporal necessities, having taken no bread with them; nay, later on, many of them followed Him from afar to a mountain whither He had withdrawn, where they were content to remain three days listening to the charms of His voice, without caring for anything to eat.³ So self-sacrificing a devotedness elicited from our Lord the second miracle of the multiplication of loaves, to feed the four thousand. As soon as it was known at Capharnaum that He was in the house, where probably He abode, "many came together, so that there was no room, no, not even at the door, and He spoke to them the word."⁴ We read that after the cure of Simon's wife's mother, and the healing of numerous sick whom they brought to Him, "all the city was gathered together at the door."

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 1, 2.

² St. John xiv. 13.

³ St. Mark xiii. 1—3.

⁴ St. Mark ii. 2.

The next morning, "rising very early," He went "into a desert place," whither Simon and they that were with him followed after Him, and when they had found Him they said to Him: "All seek for Thee." And He saith to them: "Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities that I may preach there also, for to this purpose am I come."¹

These and innumerable other examples might be adduced, in proof of the attraction which our Lord's words possessed for the multitude in various places. Nor can it be justly urged that they were probably drawn after Him, more by the fame of the miracles which accompanied them, than the sweetness of the words themselves. For a careful reading of the Sacred Text will show that, in most instances, either His preaching and instructions did not precisely agree in time with the working of His miracles, and therefore the attachment of the multitudes to His Person and to His words was independent of them; or else He had already performed His miracles of healing the sick, casting out devils, and the like, and still the people continued with Him, hanging upon His words, and thirsting to hear more of His heavenly doctrine. It was after listening to the Divine eloquence and the touching significance of the Parable of the Marriage-supper, that we are told "great multitudes went with Him."² And, although He warned them that He required on the part of His disciples a total detachment from all things, detecting, as His words appear to indicate, how much they longed to follow Him more closely; yet, we are not told that any of them went back or, at that time at least, deserted Him. In the next chapter of St. Luke we read that the publicans

¹ St. Mark i. 35.

² St. Luke xiv. 25.

and sinners drew near Him, not for the purpose of witnessing a miracle, but in order to hear Him; and the like also occurred in the house of St. Matthew. It is indeed true, there were certain occasions on which our Lord Himself declared that some at least had sought Him, not because they had seen miracles—which should have led them to believe in His Divinity—but because they “had eaten of the loaves and were filled.”¹ This our Lord made His opportunity for warning them, not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for the Bread of Everlasting Life, which He alone could give them. St. John also narrates that a great multitude of the Jews came to Bethania, knowing that our Lord was there, but that “they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead.”² Many also, doubtless, came to Jesus with a view of receiving temporal benefits, cures, and the like, but even such interested and imperfect motives as these were turned by our Lord to the profit of the souls who approached Him, and thus opened the way for His speaking to them words of life, which they were ever glad to hear.

We may further judge of the beauty of our Lord’s words by the effects which they often produced instantaneously in particular individuals, seeing that His words of grace and life were not reserved for the multitude alone. It would seem as though He contrived opportunities—as indeed, beyond doubt, He did—for finding His way to the hearts of certain persons, although His meeting with them, in many instances, appeared to be altogether accidental. Among such we may count that in which, with so infinite a grace, He spoke the Parable of the Supper in the first instance for the

¹ St. John vi. 26.

² St. John xii. 9.

edification of one of the guests in the house of the Pharisee, whither He had gone, on a certain Sabbath-day, "to eat bread." St. Luke, with his accustomed fulness of detail, narrates the whole scene for us at length. Our Lord had, in presence of the assembled company, healed the man sick of the dropsy, with the special design, it would seem, of eliciting from the lawyers and Pharisees their opinion as to the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath-day. He proposed to them a question which, without direct or open reflection upon themselves, so briefly and clearly exposed their inconsistency and hypocrisy that they were unable to make any reply. He next addressed His parable to those who had been invited to the present feast, and whom He had observed choosing the first seats at the table. After this, He spoke exclusively to his host in words of exquisite beauty and gentle persuasiveness, declaring those persons blessed who exercised in this life disinterested charity, and sought only that recompense which shall be made them at the resurrection of the just. No wonder that His words so forcibly struck one of those sitting at table as to draw from him a generous acknowledgment of the deep significance of what our Lord had said: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Our Lord, doubtless, read in the soul of that man a yearning after His Kingdom, for, turning immediately to him, as the Evangelist notes, He narrated, as though for his particular benefit, the suggestive Parable of the Wedding-supper. Nor can we doubt that he, to whom this instruction was delivered, formed one of the multitude who went forth after our Lord, and, in reward for their good-will, were the recipients of still more detailed and advanced instructions, persuading them

to attach themselves more closely and exclusively to His service.¹

Again, a certain Scribe, who had heard the Pharisees and Sadducees reasoning with our Lord, and had listened to the wisdom of His answers, came to Him and asked, "Which was the first commandment of all?" Our Lord repeated for him, not only the first commandment, but also the second, making on both His own brief but impressive commentary: "There is no other commandment greater than these."² The Scribe must from his youth up have heard those same commandments read out of the book of the Law; yet they had, evidently, never before entered with such unction into his soul. This we may gather from his reply, and especially from his concluding words, which reveal in how new and strong a light he now beheld the imperative obligation of loving "one's neighbour as oneself." The earnest sincerity of his acknowledgment drew from the lips of Jesus the declaration, that he was not far from the Kingdom of God. Another instance we have in the long conversation, of such exquisitely mingled incisiveness and gentleness, which He held with the Samaritan woman, having the result of the immediate conversion of that soul, until then so sensual and callous. After He had been there two days, the whole city of Samaria was stirred, and many believed in Him, not for the saying of the woman, but because they themselves had heard Him, and knew "that this was indeed the Saviour of the world."³

No colloquy can be more remarkable than the one Jesus deigned to hold with Nicodemus when, for fear of the Jews, he came secretly by night, since in that

¹ St. Luke xiv. 7.

² St. Mark xii. 31.

³ St. John iv. 42.

interview we have proofs of the marvellous power of His Divine words, and the fulness of heart with which He gave utterance to them, on every occasion wherein He saw that His Father's glory, or the good of a single soul, could be promoted. Nicodemus felt inspired to believe the Divine Mission of Jesus, nevertheless, in the earlier part of the conversation, given at so great length by the Evangelist, we discern a certain hesitation, brought to a point in the final expression of His difficulties: "How can this be done?" Our Lord replied by another question pointed with gentle sarcasm: "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things!" After this we have no further word of doubt on the part of one who apparently now placed himself completely in the hands of our Lord. The Divine words, commencing with the tender reproach of the argument: "If I have spoken to you earthly things and you believe not, how will you believe if I speak to you heavenly things?" thenceforth flow on in uninterrupted harmony and persuasiveness; while the new disciple listened, in silence, to the history of the descent of the Son of Man from Heaven, the prediction of His lifting up upon the Cross, and those assurances of the inexhaustible love of the Father which, from that day forward, have thrilled and conquered innumerable souls, telling how "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son for its salvation."¹ Although no longer the heavenly seed fell on unfruitful ground, it was not until the end that Nicodemus openly proclaimed himself a disciple of our Lord. But when that moment came, his words and generous bearing in the closing scene of the Passion nobly repaired all previous delay.

¹ St. John iii. 1.

When, passing from "the multitude" and those among it to whom our Lord addressed words of personal import, as He did to the Scribe, the Samaritan woman, and Nicodemus, we consider the words spoken by Him to those whom He called to be the intimate friends of His Public Life, we seem to gain a wholly fresh insight into their beauty in themselves, and their efficacy in attracting souls and leading them along the "hard ways" of perfection. We must have repeatedly read the narrative describing the call of the Apostles, and yet the remarkable beauty and suitableness of the words made choice of by our Lord for His purpose, in each and all of these occasions, have probably failed to strike many amongst us.

It was as He walked by the Sea of Galilee that Jesus saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting their nets into the sea, "for they were fishermen."¹ Our Lord, we are told, simply said to them: "Come after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." The result of which words was that they immediately left their nets and followed Him. In the souls of those whom He addressed the germ of the Apostolic spirit was already laid, so that the figure of speech employed by our Lord readily enkindled the fire of zeal that smouldered there. With admirable wisdom He made use of the occupation which they followed as a means of representing to them the great work for which they were destined. They were to become "fishers of men." In that short phrase was brought before them the soul-saving labour of the Apostleship; and, all rough and unlettered as they were, inexperienced also in Divine things, the vocation lit up in their hearts a flame which time should never see extinguished. Thus they could

¹ St. Mark i. 16, 17

not resist following Him Who had set before them a sublime mission, that appealed so powerfully to the vague, half-conscious yearning in their souls. And Who is this Stranger Whose words, so concise and yet so imperative, so simple and yet so fragrant with all possible consequences, they felt impelled by some mysterious influence to obey? What probability, humanly speaking, was there of His being able to fulfil His promise: "I will make you to be fishers of men"? What distinct evidence had they of that power? Upon what grounds did He demand the absolute relinquishment of all previous ties; and whither were they to follow Him? They could answer none of **these things**. They only knew His words had thrilled them, had touched a chord within their souls which, until then, had never vibrated, and yet, once awakened, could never more be hushed. It was the same with James and John whom He met shortly after. At His word, they left their father, Zebedee, in the ship and followed Jesus.

Two short words alone sufficed to change Matthew from a mere man of business, bent only on amassing riches, into a fervent disciple and finally into an Apostle: "Follow Me," said Jesus; "and rising up he followed Him." Here there is not even a promise held out, or any hint as to the nature of the work that was destined for Him. There was but the unction contained in those two words, forming the outward expression or sign of an interior grace, which at the same moment was shed into the soul of St. Matthew. Who, save Jesus, could have worked by the power of His voice so great a miracle of grace? In this case the words themselves were ordinary ones, yet what force and graciousness must have modulated the tone

in which they were spoken, what Divine attractiveness must have been exercised, through them, to command the obedience at once granted to their utterance. Our Lord gained St. Philip by the self-same words, for they achieved a like result. Nay, Philip at once commenced his Apostolate by calling Nathaniel; who, in his turn, being ravished on hearing the voice of Jesus and the sweetness of His words, pronounced without delay his full conviction of our Lord's Divinity, acknowledging Him for the King of Israel.¹ And so it was that, one after another, men of strong minds yielded themselves up to the fascination of a voice whose power "breaketh the cedars," and whose sweetness is "**more than honey and the honeycomb.**"

In studying attentively the utterances of our Lord as they are left to us in the Gospels we cannot fail to be struck, not only with their essential beauty, but also with the particular significance which they possessed for the respective persons to whom they were addressed. And this method of speaking to the minds and hearts of men individually, of distinguishing between spirit and spirit, and of accommodating Himself to each one in turn, He commenced long before His human lips could frame the uttered words. Whilst He was but an Infant in the manger, and could manifest His interior meaning only to the eyes of men, He employed methods in harmony with the calling and capacity of those destined to be His first worshippers on earth, for the purpose of drawing them to His little crib at Bethlehem. Thus He sent Angels as His fitting messengers to the simple *Shepherds*, at the same time that He placed His bright shining mysterious star in the heavens, to give due intimation to the Eastern

¹ St. John i. 43.

Magi, whom science had occupied and familiarized with the study of the heavenly bodies. And so it ever has been that, as in the case of the two disciples going to Emmaus, "Jesus went with" those whom He came on earth to draw to Himself, that so they might be saved. In speaking to men of learning, as to Nicodemus, a "master in Israel," He discoursed at length on deep doctrinal truths; He did the same in respect of the doctors of the Law. Wrapped up in His marvellous words, we find Him expounding to these subtle reasoners the grandest theology of the Church touching His own Divinity and Unity with the Father, but using words so full of tender devotion to that Father Whose glory He sought, of fond yearning to win over the belief of those whom He addressed, and of almost passionate grief because they would not believe and so obtain eternal life, that we marvel at the hardness of the hearts which could resist the force and influence of such loving persuasiveness.¹

When addressing simple and uncultured minds, on the other hand, He employed the figures that would speak straight to their senses, and were familiar to them in their daily occupations. With husbandmen He used the simile of the wheat and the cockle, and illustrated the different effects of His words by the various products of the harvest in such parables as that of the Sower and his seed. He even turned to account the most ordinary of domestic duties, in His desire to bring home to them the signification of His words, as when He warned them of Judgment perhaps suddenly to come in the midst of their ordinary occupations, by instancing the cases of the two men in the field, and of the two women grinding at the mill.² Yet, how-

¹ 1 St. John v. 17, seq. ; vii. 16, seq.

² St. Matt. xxiv. 41.

ever lowly and homely were the comparisons selected by our Lord for instructing the ignorant, so commonplace, in truth, as to appear to ordinary judgments unworthy of His Divine wisdom and the splendour of His intelligence, He is never more truly human without injury to His Divinity, never more beautiful, never more Himself than when bearing Himself in all simplicity, annihilating, so to speak, His Divine knowledge, in order to render eternal truths comprehensible to the poor and ignorant, as a necessary step to the saving of their souls.

Another beauty characterizing the teaching of Jesus is the depth and fulness of meaning which He conveyed without "much speaking." The whole Gospel narrative is rich to overflowing with the abundant utterances of our Lord, and yet when we consider the immensity of the work He had to accomplish, and the short space of time He gave Himself wherein to perfect it, we must acknowledge Him to have been sparing in His words, rather than lavish—a self-restraint which indeed was most consistent with the Divine instincts of His all-holy Soul. No sentence, no word could ever be called superfluous. Each bore its own significance, each served as a link in the one chain of His arguments, lending its aid with a wonderful fitness to secure the end He had in view. The Holy Spirit has transmitted to the Church of God, and to her alone, a like directness of aim. This special character distinguishes her liturgical prayers from all those suggested by private devotion, however excellent. In the divinely authorized language of the Church we find nothing diffuse or superfluous. Each prayer moves in perfect harmony with the feast or mystery with which it is associated, its simplicity of language, yet depth and

beauty of expression, stamping it as of heavenly origin.

Although we are bound to refer back the force and beauty of our Lord's words to that Divine eternal truth whence they drew their source, according to the words of the Psalmist: "The beginning of thy words is truth,"¹ and must own that their wonderful depth of wisdom and knowledge marks them as born of God, they were not the less clothed with a human beauty, a pathos revealing His familiarity with the many fountains of tenderness in the souls of men, and carrying His lessons straight to their hearts. An instance of this grace of sympathy may seem insignificant to some, although it tells the skill of His hand in touching the most responsive chords of emotion within the human breast. It was our Lord's frequent habit to pronounce the name of the persons whom He addressed, in a tone of mingled impressiveness and affection, when He desired to arouse their minds to a very earnest appreciation of the importance of what He was about to say. This was especially remarkable in His conversations with His immediate disciples.

Our Lord sometimes addressed the Chief of the Apostles by that new surname of Peter, which He Himself had given him; at other times He called him by the name of Simon. But in either case His words, thus prefaced, contained an especial appeal to the serious consideration or tender susceptibilities of the chosen Apostle. To quote some occasions, we find our Lord commencing His solemn warning to St. Peter, at the Last Supper, by the repetition of his name: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Whilst, in reply to the

¹ Psalm cxviii. 160.

Apostle's over-confident protestation of fidelity, Jesus, with the view of lovingly arousing him to greater distrust in self, called him by the name he had received when promised the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and declared Head of the Church: "I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest Me."¹ So likewise in Gethsemane, when Jesus came to His three Apostles and found them sleeping, it was to Peter He specially addressed Himself in words that seem connected with those cited above, for we discover in them a tone of pained surprise that the warning, so lately given, should so soon be disregarded: "Simon, sleepest thou?" and then follows another warning to watch and pray, lest temptation should prove too strong for him. This habit of our Lord repeated itself even during the forty days that followed His Resurrection, and never did it, with a finer delicacy, illustrate His Divine possession of the secret of opening a way into the tenderest emotions of the heart than when, on the occasion of the last appearance related by St. John, Jesus with so light and loving a hand touched the spring of a sweet penitential sorrow in the heart of His Apostle, and, as a counterpoise to his three-fold denial, drew forth from him a three-fold declaration of humble and self-renouncing love. "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" In the double repetition of His question no mention of the other Apostles is made, but only the earnest appeal to Peter's broken heart: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"

It was during the discourse after the Last Supper that Philip, moved by the eloquence of his Master's words while speaking of God the Father, exclaimed:

¹ St. Luke xxii. 31-34.

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."¹ Our Lord's reply must be reserved for consideration later on, but it presents another example of His drawing particular attention, by the mention of Philip's name, to the grave importance of the instruction which follows, regarding the union of our Lord in Nature with His Heavenly Father. Even towards the very traitor himself is the same gentle means employed for awakening the conscience, and enkindling once more, if possible, the flame of love. These, if anything could revive them, must surely have made some response to the renewed rousing the patient waiting, the sad appeal to some possibly lingering sense of shame at an act of aggravated treachery, and the unspeakable tenderness, all combining their sweet force in the Divine remonstrance: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"² St. Matthew records the question full of gently warning reproach: "Friend, whereto art thou come?" by which Jesus designated him still as one of His chosen band of followers, to whom He had made known all things whatsoever He had heard of His Father.³ When, after His Resurrection, our Lord would make known to Thomas the gravity of his unwillingness to believe, He, in like manner, emphasized and softened His rebuke by the introduction of his name: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed." Such instances as these remind us how God, in olden times, through the mouth of His Prophet, called upon His chosen people to return to Him, saying: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, and called thee by thy name; thou art Mine."⁴ Thus did He adapt Himself, even

¹ St. John xiv. 8.² St. Luke xxii. 48.³ St. John xv. 15.⁴ Isaias xliii. 1.

before the Word became Incarnate, to the instincts and susceptibilities of the human heart.

In another way did our Lord impress the hearts of His Apostles by affectionately addressing them as "children," under such circumstances also, as must have been peculiarly grateful and consoling to them. It happened after the defection of the young man who had shown such readiness, and even desire, to follow our Lord more closely and perfectly than the commandments required. Jesus, on seeing him depart, commented in the presence of His disciples, and chiefly, as it would seem, for their benefit, upon the difficulty of a rich man entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. Observing that His disciples were astonished at His words, He repeated them with greater emphasis, and as having a fuller significance for those who had left all things to follow Him. He did not now speak simply of the danger of possessing riches, but still more of having any affection for, or placing any trust in them; yet would He soften the sternness of His warning by the tender epithet of "children."¹ How sweetly that word must have fallen upon their ears, and sunk into their hearts, filling them with tender gratitude in return for the grace which enabled them to persevere in their vocation, and entitled them to be regarded as the "children of the Heart of Jesus." It was the title also under which our Lord would make Himself known to His Apostles when, after His Resurrection, He stood on the shore, watching their return from their night's unprofitable fishing: "Children, have you any meat?"² Its very sound must have prepared the way for their recognition of Him.

Let us turn now to a fresh head, giving prominence

¹ St. Mark x. 24.

² St. John xxi. 5.

to the force and beauty of our Lord's words; we refer to the earnest vehemence which often characterized them. Men are quite enough given both to think and to speak with vehemence; and too frequently their energy comes from bitterness of personal feeling, from pride, self-complacency, arbitrary dislikes, or some other of the many fruits of human passion. But the vehemence of Jesus was the vehemence of truth. It was the echo of that Eternal Word, Whose power called forth all things out of nothing; and it struck the same note of solemn prediction and stern warning that was heard, in olden times, from the mouth of the Prophets of the Most High. What an intensified suggestion of difficulty in the attainment of any point was conveyed in that little word "how," by which our Lord often introduced some particular instruction. Thus, when dwelling on the impediments in the way of the rich man's salvation, He uttered the exclamation: "How hardly shall they, that have riches, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!" Again, when speaking of the trials and temptations of the spiritual life, He gave to His words a tone of pain, and almost surprise: "How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it."¹ He speaks so feelingly because He was Himself that gate, and His Heart was full at the thought of the many who would recoil before the straitness and narrowness, which obliged them to lay down their burdens of pride and worldly riches, or else despair of ever entering in.

Opposed, as was the language of our Lord, to the pretentious ostentation of worldly orators, or of the preachers to be found among the Jewish priests, yet assuredly never was diction so attractive in its simple

¹ St. Matt. vii. 14.

grace, so blended with poetical imagery, so rich in its calm unstudied eloquence, as that which He Himself employed. Not only, as has been said before, did He adapt His similes and illustrations to the class of persons who were listening to Him, and utilize for the purpose of clear explanation the objects with which they were familiar, and the train of thoughts which their respective callings rendered habitual to them. He seized also, with admirable discernment, upon the accidental circumstances of the moment, or upon passing scenes, which He could interweave with His subject, and so make it more intelligible and impressive to His hearers. Even the grass they trod beneath their feet, the lilies that bloomed in the fields, the bright-plumaged birds flying overhead, were all brought into requisition to show forth the paternal providence of their Heavenly Father, Who, if He bestowed so great thought upon these inanimate or irrational creatures, would much more clothe and care for His children, who were capable of knowing Him, and of recognizing and returning His love. The fields of wheat "white for the harvest," upon which they are bidden to lift up their eyes, are represented to His disciples as a figure of the souls for whose salvation they are to labour in their apostolic mission, and pray with all the fervour of an apostolic spirit.¹

We read, in the Gospel of St. John, that our Lord went early in the morning into the Temple, where a vast concourse of people coming to Him, He began to teach them. The discourse appears to have been interrupted by the Jews bringing before Him the woman taken in adultery, after which Jesus resumed His subject by declaring Himself to be the Light of

¹ St. Matt. ix. 38.

the world. We may easily imagine to ourselves that the first dawn of day was just then breaking, and the shadows of night beginning to pass into the distance; the golden light of the sun's first rays was on the point of streaming in, and burnishing the carved work of the Temple, as with a sudden glory. How likely was it that some such incident drew from the lips of Jesus the descriptive words just recorded.¹ This supposition fits in well with His habit of illustrating His words by reference to events around Him, for what else could have suggested more worthily the beautiful imagery, by which He styles Himself the "Light of light," "the true Sun of Justice," "the Morning Star," which has arisen to illumine the world after long ages of darkness, and now shall know no setting. He made use also of the legal ceremonies customary among the Jews, to bring before them the truth that in Him was fulfilled every figure and every prophecy. Thus when, with so great earnestness, He invited the people: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink," it is most probable that a figurative ceremony was then being conducted in the Temple when Jesus was speaking, and that He drew the attention of the people from it to the reality fulfilled in Himself—through Whom, it was foretold: "As many as believed in Him should receive the Holy Spirit."²

It is, moreover, to be noticed that as the hour drew near in which the Jews were, by their belief in or final rejection of Him, to decide their own salvation or reprobation, the words of Jesus were uttered with an access of intense earnestness, which the special Evangelist of the Divine words of Jesus has not failed to notify. Thus, St. John tells us that, because the Jews

¹ St. John viii. 12.

² St. John viii. 37—39.

brought forward as a testimony against our Lord's Divinity that they knew from whence He came, and could certify as to His country and His parentage, "Jesus therefore cried out in the Temple, teaching and saying: You both know Me, and you know whence I am." In this way did He turn their own words against themselves, and produce a very great impression by His reiterated declaration of His Divine Mission, so that "many of the people believed in Him."¹ His Heart in truth yearned over them, and like one in an agony of fear lest they should allow the light of day to escape them, and thus pronounce their own terrible doom, He "cried out in the Temple," towards the closing scenes of His Public Ministry, "on the last and great day of the festival," imparting to His accents "that voice of the Lord which is in power," strong to break with its sweetness "the cedars of Libanus," and in the irresistible tenderness of its "magnificence" to reduce them to pieces.²

The beauty of the words of Jesus may be said to reach its climax in those which came with such saddened pathos from His Heart during His discourse to His chosen ones, the night before His Passion. Affectionate as He had ever been in His relations with them, in His rebukes no less than in His praise, yet as His hour drew near He seemed to set no limit to His confidence in their sympathy, and to the tenderness with which He gave expression to it. He told them, in few and sorrowful words, of the act of treachery of which He was about to be the victim. He gave them a new commandment of mutual love, and interwove the theme, so consoling to His Heart, through every part of His discourse. He told them of the "many

¹ St. John vii. 28, 29, 31.

² Psalm xxviii. 4—6.

mansions in His Father's house" destined for them, and for others, whither He went to prepare a place for them, that where He was they also might be. He promised that whatever they asked the Father in His Name He would grant them, in order "that the Father may be glorified in the Son," and that he who believed in Him should perform, not only the works they had seen Him do, but even greater than these. He proposed to them the highest of all motives for their fidelity to His commandments, that of their love for Him. He raised their souls heavenward, on the wings of His words so tenderly eloquent concerning the Father, in the love of Whom His Human Heart was consumed. Then, heightening the fervour of their desires, He promised as the reward of those who kept His words, that they themselves should share in the love of His Heavenly Father, and in the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. By the very beauty of His language, and the thrilling accents of His words, He fired their souls with an intense longing for that Divine life which the Holy Spirit was to breathe into them, and for the light of Truth He should shed abroad in their hearts; at the same time that His words were designed to instil into their breasts the peace which surpasseth all understanding, and which the world, as it cannot give, so neither can it take away.¹

In the continuation of His discourse with His disciples our Lord, according to His wont, takes up a fresh symbol, that of the vine-tree and its branches, in which He explains the intimate union with Him it is necessary for them to maintain. This union with Him, through grace, He compares to the closeness of His own, by Nature, with the Father; and they are to

¹ St. John xiv. 27.

abide in His love, even as He also abides in the love of the Father. "These things I have spoken to you," He adds, "that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled."¹ He goes on to call them "little children and friends," because He has withheld no confidence from them, and He tells them that they are chosen by Him simply through the love He bore them, and have been called to share indeed on earth in His persecutions and sorrows, but to be the recipients, hereafter, also of a heavenly mission; whose fruit should remain and merit for them an eternal crown of reward. He next discourses of the Spirit of Love Whom He will send them from the Father, the Comforter, Whose office it will be sweetly to teach them those "many things" which now they "cannot bear;" and while He takes up His abode in their souls, their present sorrow shall be turned into joy. He will not leave as orphans those who have been with Him from the beginning. He cannot cease to assure them of His own abiding presence with them, though their eyes shall no more behold Him visibly, as hitherto. Finally, He promises to come at last and take them to Himself, that where He is they also may be, when their hearts shall rejoice, and their joy no man shall take from them.

Thus it was that, on the last night of His sojourn upon earth, our Lord opened out to them the very secrets of His Heart, suffering the plenitude of its love to flow down upon the little band of faithful Apostles gathered round Him. They cannot but have known long before how He loved them, but now they listened to a declaration of that love, expressed in language which the angels must have heard with profoundest awe and astonishment: "As the Father hath loved Me,

¹ St. John xv. 11.

I also have loved you." Then, pleading for return of affection, He adds: "Abide in My love."¹ Truly, the key-note to the whole discourse is love, in marvellous detail and variety, seeing that the love of the Father and of the Holy Spirit for the followers of Jesus, together with His own love for them, both human and Divine, lead up to that spirit of mutual love and union, which they are to manifest towards one another, and likewise towards Him. Thus did He mark His last address to them with a character peculiar to itself. It is, as it were, the epitome of His whole life's teaching, the outspoken revelation of truths suggested long before in His manner of acting and of working. All these breathe forth the eternal love of the Word, and the human love of the Incarnate Son of God, the affectionate authority of the Lord and Master combined with the loving appeal of a Brother, about to part from closest relatives made doubly dear to Him by the share they had already borne in His sorrows, and the far greater share reserved for them in the future. The united tenderness of all human hearts linked together by the strongest and holiest of ties, all the subdued melancholy of earth's endless farewells seem concentrated in that last outpouring of inward feeling, which still exhales a fragrance and pungency, as fresh now as when, amidst the solemn events of that memorable night, they first found utterance from the lips of Jesus.

But the words spoken by Jesus later on even than these we have been considering, teach us truths of yet deeper import, while they hold our souls captive beneath the mystery of the Cross. As, after the last discourse, our Lord turned to His Eternal Father and poured out His Soul to Him in prayer for those upon

¹ St. John xv. 9.

whom He had just been lavishing the tenderest expressions of His love; so when hanging on the Cross, after every effort and means had been expended for converting the hearts of men to His Father and persuading them to recognize in Himself their promised Messiah, He turned once more to that Father Whose will He had, on His side, so faithfully accomplished, and employing the last resource of all, He prayed to the end for those who still persevered in their rejection of Him. Before He would think of Himself, unspeakably great as was His agony; or of the penitent fastened to the Cross beside Him; or even of His sinless Mother, whose broken heart, as she stood beneath the Cross, furnished new torments in addition to His own, His first thought is of the eternal misery awaiting those who had hardened themselves against Him, and who, blinded by their fury, had no eyes wherewith to see the true Light of life before them. The first words that break from His parched and blood-stained lips are those of palliation, and of prayer for His murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"—a cry for pardon so beautiful in expression that no poetry can equal it, so full of the pleading of a gentle compassion, and weighted with such weariness of sorrow at the unsuccess of all that had been done for their salvation. How many who recall those words shed tears of true contrition from eyes to which weeping has been long unknown, whilst the heart within recognizes how true indeed it is that, in sinning against our God and Saviour, we "know not what we do;" yea, even now, that prayer is being incessantly renewed at the right hand of the Father, where Jesus "lives to make intercession for us."

There is another word which unfolds to us the insatiable love of the Heart of Jesus, as it found utterance in the cry, "I thirst." Nor does the whole range of our language contain an expression that more appropriately discovers to us His consuming desire for the world's salvation, than this one. Excessive thirst has the especial effect of parching the very marrow of the bones, and acts as a burning interior fire which causes inexpressible torment. All this, not only physically, but much more spiritually, did our Divine Lord suffer, when from the hard bed of the Cross the sight lay before Him of the upturned countenances of men who had rejected Him, and who had in their rejection invoked His Blood to wreak its vengeance upon themselves and upon their children, instead of praying that it should be shed for their salvation. He beheld in them the multitude of all future generations, whose souls He also loved with such inexpressible intensity that the torments endured for them were, in some sort, refreshment to His Heart. For He saw that they too would elect to squander the graces He was purchasing for them at so costly a price, and to cast themselves upon their destruction, as though in defiance of their Saviour. And all the while, His Soul was parched with a thirst exceeding in torment every kind of material thirst, although He had chosen this as the only figure in any way representing the ardent longing which devoured Him for possession of the souls who, He well knew, were only too eagerly desirous of delivering themselves out of His hands. Immediately before this cry was heard the complaint of the supreme dereliction: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Most Divine homage does the remonstrance render to the majesty of His Father, most abject is it

in its act of self-humiliation, on the part of our Lord's Humanity. His sense of the fact that He was not actually abandoned in no way diminishes His interior feeling of abandonment; just as His full knowledge that His life and death had undoubtedly merited the salvation of the world, scarcely mitigated the bitter anguish of His disappointment at the loss notwithstanding of so many souls.

Then follows the solemn announcement, "It is consummated;" expressing the infallible assurance of our Lord's mind that each single prophecy has now been accomplished, each figure realized; yet ringing, the while, in our ears as a pathetic cry, drawn from one forced to acknowledge that He can take no further step to gather in a more complete harvest in return for His sowing. A final word remains and the scene is closed. In tender thankfulness and confidence Jesus lifts up His Heart to His Father in Heaven, Whose will had been for three-and-thirty years His daily bread; of Whom, out of the abundance of His Heart, He had not ceased to speak; and Whose love had been His almost exclusive theme, as His hour drew nigh. This is no longer the appeal of His agonizing Humanity, but of the Son of the Father's love, victorious in the struggle, and modestly taking courage to Himself to claim His assured reward: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit; and saying this, He gave up the ghost."¹ Thus does Jesus join the end to the beginning, giving proof in His very words alone of the master devotion, so to speak, of His Sacred Heart. His first utterance recorded in the Gospel concerns His Heavenly Father: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"² Now, again, we hear the meek

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 46.

² St. Luke ii. 49.

Victim of that same Father's justice murmuring accents only of love, and pouring out His Heart into the Father's bosom. No wonder that the Church should, age after age, echo them in her devout Complin service, as the ideal and type of all holy deaths.

The parables alone, as rendered clear to us by the teaching of the Church, would have sufficed to make us "wise unto salvation;" whilst their descriptive beauty could not fail to win our hearts over to Him, Whose thoughts and Whose knowledge of all things they expressed, and Whose love was shadowed forth within their teaching. Wherefore, not with the utmost reverence alone, but with the most affectionate study and consideration, should the words of our Lord be meditated, remembering what He Himself more than once emphatically declared of them: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."¹ Hence are they fraught with weightier matter for our weal, or our woe, than most who read them are willing to recognize. Not only shall this world with all its shadows pass away, the earth with all the beauty it can justly claim in the order of nature, but also that which is merely sensible in the spiritual order, leaving behind but the "immovable Kingdom"—that Kingdom which has no end: wherein the words of Christ our Lord, heard by us here below, shall remain to be our everlasting joy. They, however, who hear His words and keep them not, they shall by those very words be judged, for He Himself has declared it.²

Very frequently our Lord, with the view of impressing upon His hearers the extreme importance of His sayings, prefaced them by a word most familiar to our ears: "Amen, I say to you;" or, when He would

¹ St. Luke xxi. 33.

² St. John xii. 48.

enforce them and invest them with still greater solemnity, He repeats this affirmation in a form of melodious rhythm: "Amen, amen, I say unto you." We must be on our guard against supposing passages not thus emphasized to be of minor importance, seeing that every word spoken by our Lord equally proceeds from the same Divine source, and from the same Eternal principle. Hence each and all His sayings demand our most reverential attention, and are pregnant with the truths of heavenly wisdom for the distinct and definite instruction of our souls; that "the same mind may be formed in us, which was also in Christ Jesus."¹

In the days of His mortality, His words wrought effectually in men and things that which they expressed; so that, when He said to the leper: "Be thou made clean," the man was instantly cleansed from his disease; and when He assured the blessed Magdalen, amongst others: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," she was immediately absolved. It is the same with us also, when He writes within our souls some one or other of those words, which it is the work of His Holy Spirit to recall to us. That word will certainly, provided we, on our side, "have ears to hear" and hearts to correspond, effectually operate within us the spiritual good it was designed to produce for our own sanctification, and for the glory of the Father.² So shall we be made clean, "by reason of the word which He shall have spoken to us," clean from sin, and worldliness, and selfishness.³ So shall we fulfil the dearest wishes of His Heart that we should remain faithful to Him, "Abide ye in My love."⁴ Abiding thus in His love, we shall realize another desire, which He has elsewhere expressed, that

¹ Philipp. ii. 5.

² St. John xiv. 26.

³ St. John xv. 3.

⁴ St. John xv. 9.

we should "continue in His word," whereby "we shall become His disciples indeed, and shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free," with the freedom of the children of God.¹

CHAPTER XVIII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS SILENCE.

He will be silent in His love (Sophonias iii. 17).

WE have dwelt at considerable length upon the beauty of the words which fell from the lips of our Divine Lord during His sojourn upon earth, and yet we feel that neither time nor eternity can exhaust the subject. On approaching the consideration of His silence, a still greater difficulty presents itself to us. Among the utterances of Jesus occur many different forms and expressions, wherein individual souls will find nourishment, according to their own peculiar predilections, and according to the various states and circumstances of life in which they are placed. But in regard of our Lord's silence, it is otherwise.

Silence, although often possessing a beauty of meaning all its own, is in great measure of a negative character, and therefore less capable of direct appeal to the intellect and heart of man. These, undoubtedly, receive their chief impressions from what is sensible and external; and, as this is the case in our own intercourse with our fellow-men, so likewise, in proportion, is it with reference to our Lord Himself. It will, therefore, be of very great profit to ourselves if we can render

¹ St. John viii. 31.

more tangible that beauty of silence in Him which mirrors forth, no less clearly than His words, the Divinity of Jesus, Who was the Wisdom of the Father and His only Word, silently uttered from all eternity.

The consideration of the silence of our Lord during His sacred Infancy, scarcely enters into the scope of the present work. It belongs exclusively to that mystery, and as such has been treated by those who have made it the special subject of their study. It is sufficient for us merely to suggest the abundant fruit to be derived from the meditation of that self-imposed muteness which Father Faber so justly numbers among the *penances* of the Divine Infancy. The silence of our Lord may, for the benefit of those unaccustomed to the simplicity of contemplative prayer, be classified under several heads, so as to be regarded in different aspects. Thus the silence of the sacred Infancy may be termed a prolonged state, most in conformity with that portion of the mortal life of Jesus. It constituted one characteristic of our Lord's condition at that period, as did His weakness and infantile dimensions; without these there would have been manifest imperfection in His manner of assuming a state which He was to exhibit to us in all its perfection. He appealed, indeed, most eloquently to the hearts of men by His very muteness, weakness, and dependence; just as in the Passion, when it was natural that the intensity of His sufferings should reduce Him to a state of helplessness and silence He preached a Divine resignation by the self-possession of His silent endurance.

But, passing on from this brief allusion to that state of silence which His Infancy prescribed to Him, we turn now to His deliberate and self-chosen observance of silence at stated periods in His Public Life, more

particularly during the years of His Hidden Life at Nazareth, and in the more awful moments of His Passion. Every occasion on which Jesus preserved silence presents to us some fresh mystery in the exercise of His Divine attributes, and manifests to us through His Human Nature the perfections of the Godhead. Nor perhaps anywhere is the action of His Divine attributes more profoundly and wonderfully exhibited than when made incarnate, as it were, in the Hidden Life of the Man Jesus. In our Lord's occasional acts of reticence our minds may find some food for meditation, if we cannot comprehend all that is involved in the silence of Him Who yet was ever teaching. But in the long mysterious silence of the hidden years no distinct points come before our view. It is a vague but lovely vision which our intellect fails to grasp, and so, with a reverent act of faith, we prostrate ourselves in most profound homage before a mystery which we may adore, but cannot penetrate. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the portion of our Lord's life from the finding in the Temple, which is generally marked as the conclusion of the period of the Holy Childhood, until the commencement of His Ministry, a space extending over eighteen years, is that which offers fewer points for meditation than any other part of His sojourn upon earth. In vain do we seek, in the various books of meditation, for adequate notice of so precious a treasure of the thoughts, acts, and sayings of Divine and Infinite Wisdom, as are contained in those eighteen years. A few considerations on the exterior life in that hallowed sanctuary are all that are proposed to us, whilst but little notice is taken of the beauty of the inner life of the Incarnate Son of God, so far as this can be read in the light thrown on it by theology, and

by that knowledge of the sentiments of His Heart which Jesus has Himself given us in the words He afterwards spoke, and in the actions which He afterwards performed. Nevertheless, Nazareth yields abundant matter for discursive meditation, as well as for contemplation, a meditation amply sufficient for laying the foundations of the spiritual life, and tending to cultivate within our souls a true love of the beautiful in Divine things, as well as to draw us nearer and more affectionately to that Heart, which was ever hidden in the bosom of the Father. Humble as were His external employments during the life of Nazareth, perhaps our Lord nowhere brings so strikingly before a contemplative mind the active energy of the ever-silent, yet ever-fruitful, Godhead. In that eternal life before creation, when creatures existed only in the mind of Him Who, at the moment predetermined by His own everlasting decree, would call them forth out of nothing, there was no sound, no light, there was but the changeless life of God. That life so full of occupation, yet so tranquil and immutable, wherein the Word was ever being uttered by the Father amid the eternal silence, wherein the Divine mind was occupied with the stupendous plan of the Incarnation of the Word, Himself the Cause of all creation, Himself the Divine Exemplar according to Whom every form of life should be modelled, and in Him should find its beginning and its end.

Then actual creation sprang forth, but in God all remains unchanged. Creation is in its effect outside His adorable Essence, and He abides in His Divine calm, as all complete, and as all perfect as before.¹ World

¹ Although in one sense it is true to say that God was *eternally acting*, since the Son was eternally being begotten by the Father, and the Holy

after world sprang into existence, out of chaos. This earth of ours, destined to be the dwelling-place of the Only-Begotten, during the days of His humiliation, was perhaps the supreme object of the Divine complacency, for may we not believe that God loved to see its beauty growing, and delighted in adorning it, and rendering it less unworthy of Him by Whose footsteps it should one day be hallowed? He called forth also the splendours of the heavens, and the earth with its teeming luxuriance, and the mighty seas with their forests of coral and their multitudinous animal life within those silent and motionless ocean-depths, type of His own unchangingness. And, for this act of creating a mighty universe, one single *fiat* sufficed. Thus silently did God accomplish His work.

Ever since then, age after age, His work goes on. Not an atom of life exists, of whatsoever form or kind, to the preservation of which He does not concur; and without His concurrence it would return to its original nothing. He is minutely and uninterruptedly occupied with the lowliest wild flower on the solitary hillside, and with the scarcely visible insect which burrows in the earth, imparting to each one its due perfection, and enabling it to fulfil the end for which He gave it being. Not a sparrow is forgotten, before the God Who gave it life.¹ Nay, the very hairs of our head are numbered by Him Who clothes the lilies of the field with beauty, and surrounds even the beasts in their pastures with

Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son; yet this was, and is, and ever will be, a *necessary act within* Himself, whereas creation was a *free act external to* Himself, though still within His all-comprehending immensity of presence and operation, an act altogether apart from, although an emanation passing forth from, His own eternal changeless life.

¹ St. Luke xii. 6.

His tender Providence. The old world goes on its way, and men devise plans of self-exaltation, unmindful of the God above them; but He is in their midst, and He is there acting in their regard, and none can resist that unseen influence, which is overruling all things. From pole to pole in this lower world, and far away in the myriad worlds beyond, that mighty ceaseless activity prevails. From the Pontiff on the sacred watch-tower, or the monarch on his throne, to the beggar who dies upon the doorstep in the cruel night-frost of winter, unknown, unmissed among his fellows, all together and each individually are they the objects of God's special occupation, of an attention detailed and undisturbed, as though they alone claimed His care. Scripture is filled, from end to end, with records of the activity of God, whilst appeals are continually addressed to Him by the saints of old, as of every succeeding age, calling upon Him to "arise, and let the nations see" that "Thou, O Lord, art God in Heaven, and rulest over all the kingdoms. In Thy hand is strength and power, and no one can resist Thee."¹

But as, in the beginning, creation was silently called forth by the omnipotent *fiat*, so also in silence God continues His work. He is silent, alike in His love and in His anger. Witness the nations left for long ages in their rebellion, and yet He does not strike, silently dissimulating, as it were, their sins, bearing with their contempt of His laws and their outrages offered to His Holy Name, that He may give them time for repentance. Then suddenly does He visit them in His terrible wrath, without further warning; and, as He treats entire nations, so also He treats the

¹ 2 Paral. xx. 6.

individual soul. We have dwelt somewhat at length upon the combined energy of work yet noiselessness of manner, which mark the operations of the Eternal Father, in order to render more clear what we are about to say respecting the mysterious silence of His Eternal Son during the long Hidden Life at Nazareth. Jesus, the Everlasting Word, was, for all those years, no less occupied with every form of life than He had been in His eternal home, within the bosom of the Father. All, therefore, that we have lately said may be equally applied to God in His incarnate life, seeing that still "His work is before Him." It was before Him incessantly in its minutest details and with an anticipation too that was about to be fearfully realized in Himself. Yet in what manner does He accomplish it? As He toils in Joseph's shop, no light of heavenly glory mantles upon the tranquil beauty of His face, which might reveal the inner thoughts wherewith His Soul is occupied. Yet that Soul, by reason of its Hypostatic Union with the Word, was endowed with so marvellous a knowledge that there was for it no past nor future, but all things lay open to it in ever-present vision.

His knowledge extended over all time and over all things created, and He saw them one and all at a glance, and this not only in His Divine omniscience as the Eternal Word, but also in the plenitude of the beatific and infused science of His blessed Soul. Uninterruptedly then His work—His own self-chosen work—the redemption of the world, was before Him. Yet, did He speak of it? To His Father undoubtedly He did, even as He had done while with the Father from everlasting. Other speech than that regarding the whole range of His infused knowledge, or all which

His omniscience as the Word rendered ever present to Him, or the foresight of the stupendous work He had come on earth to carry to a completion, speech of this we may believe He did not hold. And yet, no work ever undertaken was accomplished so perfectly, so efficaciously as by Him. The thought of it, the purpose of it guided and pervaded every action of His daily life. This gave additional elasticity to each movement and gesture, it urged on His footsteps and nerved His arm in the pursuit of His hard and wearisome toil. Few and brief were words of any kind in the Holy House of Nazareth. There was too much real life in God, with God, and for God, to admit of these—too much interior occupation in furthering His glory, and too much application to, and concurrence with, the work that was to promote it. Silent men are they who do the most work for God, carrying it out noiselessly, and secretly jealous of every aim or character which is not Divine.

But in addition to the lessons for our own practice with which the Hidden Life at Nazareth abounds, there is something inexpressibly beautiful in the contemplation of it, something which gently and softly discloses to us the loveliness of the Sacred Heart, and the Divine greatness of the Soul of Jesus. In order, however, to appreciate in any degree its mystery and its sublimity, we must keep ever before us the perfection of His knowledge, together with His omniscience as the Eternal Word. Then only shall we understand how that prolonged silence was one of His keenest sufferings as Man, whilst it moved in most marvellous harmony with the eternal ways of God.

Men speak of silence as though it meant inaction, but surely the thought of the silent activity of God

should rectify their conception of so Divine an example. It is because of this misconception that so many are in the habit of railing against the contemplative orders in the Church, and fail to recognize the true character of such a vocation. Silently indeed and noiselessly do they pursue their work after the fashion of their Divine Pattern, who for eighteen years chose a humble shop to be the scene of His preparation for the work of man's redemption. It may be confessed that the statesman, the orator, the man of letters has a limit to his sphere of action; but the active influence of the hermit in his cell, if he be but animated with the spirit of the Heart of God, extends to every shore and to every race, and his work, because Divine, will remain.

Passing from the sanctuary of Nazareth and following our Lord into His Public Life, we still find His silence witnessing to the presence of the Divine character within Him and nourishing the exceeding riches of merit in His Soul. In the preceding chapter, where we have treated of the words of our Lord at considerable length, our remarks may appear somewhat contradictory to the statements now about to be made. But it must be remembered that the consideration of His Divine utterances in no way really conflicts with the Divine wisdom of His silence in its due time and place. Everywhere and at all times He spoke as one habituated to silence, His power as the Eternal Word, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost with which His Soul was replenished contributing to render each word, each form of expression, pregnant with Divine instruction, and clothed in heavenly beauty. But the tone which He gave to His life was far more that of one who acted than of one who spoke much, and we have seen with what eloquence He influenced souls long before

His lips had uttered a word. He seldom spoke of the works that He wrought, except on the occasions when He was anxious to justify His doctrine and insist on His unity of operation with the Father, and then the sublimity of the subject, the glory of God, and the honour He owed to His own Divine Person, necessitated more detailed and repeated assertions. At other times, when His miracles should of themselves have obtained faith in His Divinity from those who witnessed them, He performed them in silence or, at all events, with little or no reference to Himself.

The discourse after the Last Supper is, as we have so lately seen, peculiarly rich in sacred utterances, for then His hour was drawing nigh and His Heart was overflowing with tenderness for His Apostles, whom He was so soon to leave, and who would be exposed, through His Passion, to such bitter trials to their faith. If our Lord was silent in His work, still more so was He in His sufferings. Long before, the Prophets had sung in pathetic strain of the sorrows which the Messiah should endure, and had depicted them so clearly that not a shadow of excuse could be advanced for those who failed to believe in Him by Whom every prophecy was fulfilled. But He accomplished in silence all that had been foretold of Him, with the exception of a few instances in which His Divine wisdom and His yearning after their souls prompted Him to remind the people of what had been written concerning Him, and to point out that its fulfilment had already taken place before them. When indeed He spoke of His sorrows, or confessed their heavy weight by the words He uttered, it was with some definite object in view for the instruction of those who heard Him, so great was His love for them and desire to gain their sym-

pathy. But we may be assured that there was a large proportion of suffering endured by our Lord regarding which He sealed His lips. Nay, the earth upon which He was an exile, being cursed on account of the sins of men, brought forth to Him who came to expiate for them nothing but thorns and tribulations everywhere. Yet how rare are the occasions upon which He suffered any mention of His sorrows and pains to escape from His sacred lips! Not to speak of the torrents of affliction which inundated His Soul from the abiding vision of sin, who shall ever take count of the keen anguish His sensitive Heart endured from unkindness, neglect, weariness both within and without, besides all the sufferings of His Blessed Body, which, from Its delicate and perfect organization, was so keenly alive to pain and fatigue and all the inconveniences of the elements? These trials and many more followed in continuous succession with our Lord, Whose whole life was a cross and a prolonged martyrdom, so that there is something exquisitely touching in the silence which the Gospel narrative itself maintains upon this point until the tridium of the Passion had arrived, allowing only certain expressions occasionally to escape which partially unveiled the suffering our Lord experienced at some particular juncture.

Our Lord's Public Ministry must have been full of such passages. How often was He not obliged to pass on from cities, as well as from individual souls, with the sorrowful experience lying at His Heart of their unbelief and of His consequent inability, humanly speaking, to convince them. There were callous minds to be encountered whose thoughts were of the earth, and hearts which could be won only by the promise of visible and temporal benefits. When once He had

gone forth from the sanctuary of Nazareth, where the refinement of exalted holiness in the persons of His Ever Blessed Mother and St. Joseph atoned to Him for the grossness of the Nazarites, He was perpetually exposed to contact with passions and dispositions that must have grated upon His Soul, like the touch of searing-irons upon the tender and quivering flesh. Well may the angels have looked down adoringly upon the majesty of the Everlasting Word, clothed in the weakness of our flesh, and walking amongst men with His eternal habit of silence cast around Him as a royal mantle, which, though instinct with the dignity of His Divine Nature, and revealing through its shining folds the plenitude of grace that dwelt within His Soul, yet concealed the sufferings imposed upon Him by the nature He had assumed. There are innumerable circumstances wherein, under the light of contemplation, the beauty of our Lord's silence will dawn upon us; thus, for example, when He found Himself obliged, because of the opposition of the rulers, to restrain the promptings of His Heart in speaking of His Heavenly Father and to modify the tone of His discourses to the people. He was herein wounded in the love that ruled Him, the love of the Father, and the desire of making Him known to the people for whose salvation He so thirsted. The sorrow caused by the check He had received lay like a burden on His Heart, and when we contemplate Him as He proceeds silently on His way, still doing all the good permitted Him, so that none of those around suspect the grief that lies hid within His breast, we rejoice that our own hearts draw us nearer to one Who so sweetly teaches us the loveliness of silent suffering. Certain occasions are mentioned in the Gospel which tell us directly of

the silence of our Lord. Thus when the Syro-Phenician woman appealed with such heroic perseverance to Him in behalf of her daughter, we read that "He answered her not a word."¹ This silence was according to the counsel of Divine wisdom, which resided in all its fulness within His Soul and guided Him in every event. The mystery of our Lord's behaviour lies in the fact that it had no repellent effect upon the woman who approached Him, for with still greater importunity she continued her appeal, evidently increasing in the strength and earnestness of her faith. Here as everywhere, when our Lord abstained from speaking there was a supernatural motive in His reticence, which, besides giving evidence of His Divine wisdom, possessed as subtle a power over the minds of those towards whom it was observed, as had His sacred words.

Silence has ever been one of God's most awe-inspiring methods of dealing with souls and peoples. It is one in which He especially clothes Himself with majesty, and is best calculated to draw forth our adoring love and lowliest submission. "Ephraim is a partner with idols," was said of old, "let him alone." Woe to the nation to which God ceases to speak by the voice of His lawful pastors, by chastisements, by warnings; woe to the soul which ceases to hear His voice in the interior whisperings of conscience, and whom He no longer addresses and warns by the persuasive monitor of suffering.

May we not classify, among the instances which the Gospels record of our Lord's silence, that most tenderly suggestive scene of His calm and silent sleep, at the hinder part of the little vessel in the midst of the

¹ St. Matt. xv. 23.

wildly excited group of His disciples, who crouched around Him in dismay and fear lest the suddenly risen storm should overwhelm their frail bark. Often had they crossed and recrossed the lake before, their very employment as fishermen must have made them quite familiar with all the moods of the little sea, now rippling gently along under the influence of the light breezes, now reflecting the bright blue sky in its unruffled breast, or swiftly, a moment after, lashed into fury by the blasts descending through the deep ravines. But they had been wont to see the eye of their Divine Master directing its glances all around, alive to every event, and keenly watchful lest any harm should come near them. Above all, the loving accents of His voice ever sounded in their ear to guide and instruct them, to resolve all their doubts, to calm all their fears, and fill their breast with confidence. The very sight of the boat in which they sailed reminded them of the crowds so frequently gathered round it, when our Lord taught the people from the bark of Peter. But now, all is changed. It is night, the evening shadows have long been deepening, the shore is distant and deserted, darkness has settled down on the lake and enveloped all in a heavy silence, save for the far-off murmur of winds collecting together up the mountain passes. The Apostles are looking out anxiously for our Lord, and are equally amazed and alarmed when they find Him quietly sleeping, shut up, as it would seem, within Himself, and utterly ignorant and regardless, alike of the storm that has swooped down upon them, or of their very natural uneasiness at being left to themselves. Yet Jesus slept on. David had declared of Him, as God: "Let Him not slumber, that keepeth thee. Behold He shall neither slumber, nor sleep, that

keepeth Israel.”¹ Jesus slept, He gave no answer, He remained silent. Yet He knew and saw all; for of Him it was said by Solomon, “I sleep, but My Heart is awake. It watcheth the voice of My beloved, knocking.”² So was Jesus silent in His love, watching, and testing, and feeding the faith, the love, and the confidence of His beloved children. And He was sleeping upon a pillow, and they awake Him, and say to Him: Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish? And rising up He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: “Peace be still. And the wind ceased; and there was made a great calm.”³ And looking back, after their first trouble of mind, upon all that had occurred, the disciples felt their hearts overflowing with love and confidence, and learnt how full to them of loving admonition had been the beauty of the silent sleep of Jesus.

As our Lord is silent in His love, so is He silent also in His anger: He seemed to be preparing the Jews for the judgments so soon to fall upon them, when they came round about Him and demanded of Him to tell them plainly if He was the Christ.⁴ The reply of Jesus was full of terrible consequences, “I speak to you and you believe not;” as though He would say, Of what avail is it that I speak to you, since you will not believe My word? and then He added, that the works which He wrought in His Father’s name gave testimony of Him, and that these alone should have more than sufficed to convince them. Of the same nature was His answer to the chief priests and ancients assembled in council, on the morning of His Passion, when they bade Him say whether He were the Christ, in the hope

¹ Psalm cxx. 3, 4.

² Cant. v. 2.

³ St. Mark iv. 37—40.

⁴ St. John x. 24.

of being able to convict Him upon His own word. This, in fact, did occur, for a little later, in reply to their sneering inquiry: "Art Thou then the Son of God?" the desire to promote the glory of His Father drew from Him the confession that He was indeed His Everlasting Son. To the previous demand, however, He replied with calm majesty, "If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me."¹ Do not these words ring in our ears as an awful presage of the reprobation about to fall upon that people, whose day of grace was already well-nigh spent? One instance, recorded by the Beloved Disciple in his history of the Passion, gives fresh proof of the tender love guiding our Lord, no less in His silence, than in His words. It is that in which the High Priest "asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine." This allusion to the disciples must have stung Him to the quick, for alas! had they not all fled from Him in their terror; and the one who returned to be near Him would shortly thrice deny that he knew Him. But He will not blame them, He will not proclaim their cowardice and desertion, and so He passes over in silence the question that had been asked concerning them, and proceeds to answer the second interrogation touching the doctrine which He had taught. Thus again was He silent in His love.

His prolonged observance of silence before the various tribunals to which He was led during His Passion, are more familiar to us and more frequently meditated than similar occasions in the earlier portions of His life. The watches of the last night He passed on earth were kept by His ruffian guards in heaping fresh outrages upon Him; the rabble rout, who followed Him through the streets of the city, taking up the cry.

¹ St. Luke xxii. 67.

When He heard the many false witnesses accusing Him before the High Priest, and found His own words cast back upon Him in scorn, not only through personal hatred, but also through misconception of His prophetic assertion that in three days He would raise up the temple again after its destruction, alluding evidently to the mystery of His own Resurrection, the silence which He perseveringly maintained was itself mysterious. Regarding it we must certainly feel sure that nothing less than the wisdom of one Who was Divine, and of a Soul replenished with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, could have justified silence in a matter wherein the glory of God itself seemed to require that it should no longer be maintained. In the presence of Pilate the like accusations were brought against Him, and yet Jesus still answered nothing. When again Pilate, desirous apparently of eliciting something whereby to refute the charges alleged, said to Him: "Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?" our Lord "answered to never a word, so that the Governor wondered exceedingly."¹ Lastly, in the court of Herod, where "some sign" was so earnestly requested from Him, that answer which might, as it seems to human judgment, have led to the conversion of many was once more withheld. Jesus answered nothing to the many questions put to Him, a silence which brought down fresh contempt, and led to His being clothed in the garment of a fool. A multitude of reasons appear in our eyes to have demanded the infringement of that rule of silence which He had imposed upon Himself. But no! save where the glory of His Father and the Divinity of His own Person were concerned, our Lord preserved, from the moment

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 13, 14.

of His arrest in the Garden, His passive attitude unchanged, as being most consonant with His manifestation of the majesty, the wisdom, and withal the patient inexhaustible love of a rejected God.

In the course of the last closing scene, the silence of Jesus became still more marked. "Led as a sheep to the slaughter, dumb, like the lamb before his shearer—He opened not His mouth ;" thus fulfilling to the letter all that had been predicted of Him.¹ The Prophet had previously declared: "He shall not cry, neither shall His voice be heard abroad."² These words were most assuredly fulfilled, for when dragged through the streets, when clothed with ignominy, crowned in derision, loaded with blasphemies, and goaded on like an overburdened animal, when falling beneath His Cross, and climbing the rough steep which led up to the place of execution, Jesus was ever silent, yet with a silence so eloquent, that it has won for Him Who kept it the loving sympathy of hearts, from generation to generation, and has been a means of sanctifying souls in every age. Finally, when hanging on the Cross amid the torments of His three hours' agony, seven short sentences only fell from His dying lips ; these were so full of beauty, so replete with meaning of great import, and formed so exquisite a revelation of Himself, that, though in exchange for nothing else could we have spared them, yet were they but momentary breaks which intensified the silence from the midst of which they made themselves heard. In the death-scene of our Lord His silence fell like a pall, gradually shrouding Him from the sight and hearing of men. The pauses between the utterance of the Seven Words from the Cross, during which the Victim, raised up between

¹ Isaiah liii. 7.

² Isaiah xlii. 2.

earth and heaven, was writhing in silent agony whilst the multitude beneath vomited forth blasphemous and ribald taunts, these held the world in suspense, and filled the souls of those who believed with a sense of awe and solemnity, which no other silence this world has ever known could convey.

How dark a cloud, how intense an anxiety must not that silence have borne down into the broken heart of God's own Blessed Mother, as she stood beneath the Cross, listening breathlessly to catch some accent that, perchance, might fall from the parched and quivering lips. Yet who could feel so impressed, as she was, by the ineffable sweetness of that long suffering patience which restrained His words. Did it not remind her of the days when her Heavenly Babe had lain upon her bosom; or when, as a little Child, He had clung to her knee, before as yet He had broken the silence of His Infancy? His Mother had waited then with an eager expectation, such as God's own Mother alone could feel, to catch the first word her Blessed Child should utter. Now, while her heart was bleeding within her, she listened with suppressed breathing for the last word, if haply another should come, to make known to her how it still fared with His Soul in its agony. Although all the circumstances were so different, yet to Mary's mind it might have seemed that Jesus was clothing Himself in death with the old habit of silence, a habit which He had brought with Him into the world from that Kingdom which He was so soon to re-enter. Was she not reminded of Bethlehem, of Egypt, and then Nazareth, as she stood in her desolation upon Calvary, when once more Jesus spoke, not to the ears, but to the eyes of men; and, in secret, to His Father in Heaven?

At last it was consummated. His work on earth was done. He had spoken where, and when, His wisdom counselled Him to do so. Neither entreaty nor warning had been spared, and nothing now remained but to stretch out His arms in mute appeal towards a people, who had not listened to His voice, who had failed to be awed even by the silence preceding the storm of future retribution. Thus having, for the last time, allowed them to hear His accents, pleading for their pardon from that Father Whose eternal relationship to Himself they had derided, and having in their hearing rendered back His Soul into that Father's bosom, He closed His lips for ever in the silence of the tomb.

Thus did He end His life, as He had commenced it, and, as during its longest portion He had wrought for man's redemption in silence, ever more prodigal of His love and of His sufferings than of His words, so has He set the example of a habit, which the saints, through their union with Him, have learnt to follow. Nevertheless, He spoke more than sufficient to give ample proof of His Divinity; and, when in the end He saw His love frustrated and rejected, He forbore to speak one word of reproach. In silence He endured, and in silent forbearance from all reproof He died for those who, because of the hardness of their hearts, would not obey His voice. He had been silent in His love; and oh! was He not beautiful in His silence?

CHAPTER XIX.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS COMPASSION.

And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them (St. Matt. ix. 36).

THERE is perhaps no feature in the character of God which is more prominently referred to throughout the Ancient Scriptures than His compassionateness. We find it continually insisted upon as a quality, we may say, superadded to His grand attribute of mercy. Moses, when he beheld God pass before him in a cloud, adored Him and exclaimed: "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true."¹ Again David, who so repeatedly commemorates the Divine clemency, speaks of the compassion of God, as if it were a quality not sufficiently expressed in the mercifulness which he at the same time attributes to Him, for he adds: "Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion." Then, later on, he describes Him as "the Lord compassionate and merciful," and in the same Psalm he lays down the root and cause of His compassion in the words: "For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth we are but dust."²

Now, a moment's reflection on the real signification of the word Compassion, will render clear many statements contained in the present chapter, which otherwise might appear obscure. In the first place the

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 6.

² Psalm cii. 4, 8, 14.

etymology of the word shows that, in its strict sense, compassion could not be ascribed to God in Himself, since it signifies suffering along with another, and for that other's sake. It cannot therefore be enumerated among the Divine attributes, like Mercy, or Love, or Goodness. A similar objection, it is true, if we regard the origin of the word, might be found with respect to sympathy and to patience, which in our Incarnate Lord became support under suffering. But, as has been shown in a previous chapter, that which resulted in suffering for the God-Man, formed, humanly speaking, in the Godhead a distinct quality contained within, and enhancing the full grandeur of the Divine character. God then could be patient; He could for ages bear with the revolt of His creatures, whilst the splendour of His immutability and the adorableness of His eternal decrees seem thereby but to shine forth the more resplendently. But with compassion, in its strict sense at least, it is otherwise. Yet is it most true and just to say that God is compassionate, if only we mark well the sense in which He is so. He is inclined to compassion, it is an integral part of the loveliness of His Divine character.

Let us venture upon a comparison which, before we proceed further, may make our meaning clear. Even amongst ourselves some men are of a compassionate nature, inclined to be deeply and readily moved by the sufferings of others; but then they require the actual presence of the afflicted person before they are excited to acts of compassion in his behalf. They would, if the opportunity were offered them, exercise compassion, but in its absence they are simply compassionate. We know well there is no analogy between the compassionateness of God and that of the most tender-hearted

amongst men, since there is no form of human suffering which is not ever present before the Father's eye, and invariably obtains the sympathy of His paternal heart. Again, He compassionates as Creator. "He knows our frame." "He hath formed us and fashioned us." "He hath made us, and not we ourselves." Every possible species of suffering, therefore, of which our souls and our bodies are capable is open to His sight, so that He takes cognizance of, and has pity upon, all the works of His hands—so great pity that the tender compassion of all men and of all the Blessed taken together is nothing but callousness in comparison with it. What then do we mean by saying that compassion is, strictly speaking, not ascribable to God in His Divine Essence? Simply this, that as compassion implies suffering with and on account of those whom we compassionate, and as suffering is impossible to God, it was only by becoming Man, by assuming the weakness of our flesh and taking a human Heart and Soul, that the Creator could, in His Divine pity, suffer with His poor creatures, and that their miseries could become to Him a source of pain. There were many things which God could touch only by means of His Incarnation: humility and humiliation, weakness and dependence, poverty and sorrow and pain. Now, compassion is one form of suffering, as will be seen in the course of our considerations, hence it could not, properly speaking, be ascribable except to a God in human flesh. There may be in God Himself mercy and pity, and even power to enter into their feelings, and yet not compassion in its fullest sense. "The mercy of God is beautiful in the time of affliction, as a cloud of rain in the time of drought."¹ As to His pity, His tender pity,

¹ Eccclus. xxxv. 26.

no mother's heart ever knew aught that could compare with it; and who amongst us is without experience of the deep sympathy of God; who has not felt that we have in Him a Father, feeling with and for His poor afflicted child, and that His sympathy is worth incomparably more than everything the whole world could give? "Whither shall I flee, but to Thee, O my God. To Thee have I lifted up my eyes, Who dwellest in Heaven," is the secret cry of the suffering soul, but above all of such as have tasted the inadequateness of all human sympathy, beautiful as that is.

But God, in His infinite love, devised a means by which His creatures should know how tenderly He compassionates them, and how compassion, as far as it was consistent with His Divine Nature, entered into and formed an integral part of His attribute of mercy. They should learn "the length and breadth and height and depth" of the Divine compassion in looking on the Incarnate Son of God, the image of His beauty, in Whom His character was revealed, and Who was the expression of His own Divine lineaments and attributes. Not by imitation, be it remembered, was Jesus like to His Father, as are more or less the saints, according to that precept which has been for them the rule of their inner life: "Be you therefore perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."¹ Our Lord is the expression of His Father by a resemblance which identifies Them in consequence of Their unity of nature. *Qualis Pater, talis Filius, talis Spiritus Sanctus.*² But, in becoming Man, He found a means of conveying to our intelligences a knowledge of the infinite love of our Heavenly Father, and of giving expression to that love in ways incompatible with God in His Essence.

¹ St. Matt. v. 48.

² Symb. St. Athan.

Thus "He humbled Himself," He became "obedient unto death," He was "compassed with infirmity," He would in all things be "made like unto His brethren," sharing in those sufferings which were the consequences of their sins. That we may return then to the point which at present mainly occupies us, we say He would, by taking a human Heart and Soul, cause His tender pitying love to become to Him a source of suffering by the keenness of His sorrow at the sight of human woe; and of this nature was His compassion.

The compassion of our Lord may be traced to three sources, independent of His omniscience as the Everlasting Word, and of His love as Creator, concerning neither of which do we speak at present. The first of these sources may be attributed to the plenitude of knowledge with which His Soul was endowed, at the moment of His Incarnation, and, that we may grasp in any degree the inexhaustible fulness of His compassion, let us keep this before our mind throughout the whole of our present chapter. Much has been already said with regard to this point, and it is only necessary to recollect how our Lord possessed His beatific knowledge from the instant He took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and how, through means of it, He saw the Essence of God with all the clearness that is possible to a perfect human understanding. He saw, moreover, all that is external to God, and it was incumbent He should do so, forasmuch as His state required an unlimited acquaintance with all things both natural and supernatural. His infused knowledge was likewise His possession from the first moment of His conception. By its light all things past, present, and future, lay distinctly and with a perfect transparency of clearness before Him. By it

He knew all things without investigation, without the medium of His senses, and without any further development. He knew all things simultaneously. Having been in possession of all the perfection of His Soul from the first moment of His life, from that moment He knew by anticipation all that He was afterwards to know through actual experience. This was not an outpouring from the Word to Whom His Soul was hypostatically united, but an interior gift whereby God placed in His mind the germ, as it were, of all knowledge. Neither could this infused knowledge be substantially increased by any actual experience according as His natural age advanced, because, His Soul being perfect from the beginning, He enjoyed, from the same moment, through the Beatific Vision and through His infused knowledge, the clearest perception of everything that it was the will of God He should experience upon earth, as well as of everything which was to befall ourselves.

Let us pause for a moment in order to consider all that is involved, to our great consolation, in this doctrine of the perfection of our Lord's knowledge, and then we can proceed to notice His personal experience of those things which were known to Him from the beginning, and the relation which all this bears to the immensity of His compassion. It is not, let us remember, only by His omniscience as the Word, but by the plenitude of His perfect knowledge, that He knows every detail of our lives, every circumstance, exterior and interior, which combines to form our own particular sorrow, to constitute our crosses, and to render those which each one has to carry different from those borne by our fellow-men. He has, besides this, viewed the trials of each one in their beginning, in their long and wearisome

development, and in their fullest aggravation. He knows what makes each trial especially heavy for us, and He can test the actual soreness of the place whereon the cross presses most sharply. He is the invisible witness of each struggle, of each tear, of each secret act of submission, and of each failure also when poor weak nature, forgetting the all-sufficiency of grace, grows weary of the battle and would fain surrender its arms and turn coward on the field. There is no form of mental anguish in which our capacity for suffering may involve us that our Lord is not aware of. There is no bodily pain we are heirs to, but the actual agony and magnitude of it is in every detail thoroughly known to Him. His knowledge of all these, and of every possible, yea even of impossible things, surpasses in completeness and in extent that of all the Blessed taken together. It is only not infinite, because His Soul, being created, is itself not infinite. Well did St. Peter exclaim, when questioned by His Master as to His love: "Lord, Thou knowest all things," and by this he reveals to us the sincerity of his repentance, for he could add immediately: "Thou knowest that I love Thee."¹ Many since that day could dare to say to our Lord, but to Him alone, that they loved Him. They would dare to say so to Him just because He "knows all things." He knows the weakness of the human heart and the strength of temptation and the struggles endured, and the love, imperfect indeed, but genuine, which cleaves to Him amidst its trials and is ever yearning to advance in fervour and devotion. Poor human hearts! Happy are you that there is indeed one Who "knoweth all things."

¹ St. John xxi. 17.

Such then is the first source of our Lord's compassion, independent of that tender pity which He entertains for us, as our Creator and our God. The second may be easily traced to His boundless love which rendered Him exquisitely sensitive to our sufferings. We enter now into a field of thought which a little attention will quickly make familiar to us, and in which the knowledge of our own hearts will guide our steps. For we feel there is no abiding in love without encountering suffering, as a great authority confesses: *Sine dolore non vivitur in amore*.¹ The reason lies chiefly in this that he who loves, feels and suffers along with the object of his love. Where is the mother, full of tender love for her offspring, who can see them suffer without experiencing an actual martyrdom in her own heart? The like may in proportion be declared of all who love. Yet where should we seek strongest confirmation of our words if not in God's own Blessed Mother? What was the sorrow which pierced her sinless Heart but her life-long compassion, so keen-edged, and so delicate in temper. Its wound was felt even before the voice of prophecy had rung in her ears. It had struck her first in Bethlehem, when she beheld her tender Babe shivering with cold in the manger, and when, eight days later, she saw His Precious Blood flow beneath the knife of circumcision. It pierced her heart when, but forty days afterwards, she offered Him a victim in the Temple, and felt within her a clear presentiment with how great strictness that oblation would be exacted and accepted, and what were to be its consequences. That invisible sword followed her through the wilderness into Egypt, and back again to Nazareth, and struck home its blow during the triduum

¹ *Imitation*, bk. iii. c. 5.

of the Passion, each separate pain of which carried a sympathetic pang into the Mother's broken heart, until her heart was at length fastened to the Cross with her dying Son, and there with Him was crucified. Yes, the life-long sorrow of the Immaculate Mother of God was her compassion, and her compassion took the form it did, because of the magnitude of her love.

We have been speaking of Divine mysteries; but, as has been said, in respect to simply human love the same may be affirmed, the stronger the love which binds the more intense will be the compassion, or, in other words, the union of suffering. Countless histories might be written of lives which have been one continuous martyrdom, resulting solely from the suffering of some beloved parent, or child, or wife, or husband, around whom all the beauty and the poetry of those lives were entwined by reason of their compassion. Even in its lowest and most natural forms, the feeling which is elicited by the sight or knowledge of suffering is painful. There would be little gentleness in a nature that could look unmoved on the suffering of a poor dumb beast; and one of the sweetest traits in childhood is its sensitiveness to the misfortunes of such sufferers. Who is there that cannot recall the expression of gratitude beaming from the eye of some faithful dog, or other irrational creature, when we have tried to relieve its pain and bestowed our pity upon it? And have not our hearts been saddened at the sight of what those animals are physically enduring without perhaps our power to afford them any alleviation. If it is thus in respect of beings not endowed with intellect, what must be the character of our compassion for men gifted with reason, our own brethren in the great human family of our Heavenly Father.

One of the fairest flowers produced in the Church of God, and only there, is supernatural compassion. It is the outpouring of the Heart of Jesus by means of the Spirit of Love Who abides for ever within the breast of His spotless spouse. It manifests itself in habitual sorrow for the vicissitudes of the Church, and for the griefs and wrongs of its visible Head, the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Every fresh outrage offered to him is an increase of suffering to a heart attuned to sympathy, and forms a new incentive to self-sacrifice for the Church's cause, which is, in fact, the cause of God and of His truth. It reveals itself again in tender compassion for the poor and in a desire to alleviate their sufferings, and this makes us like to our Lord. It approaches with sweet pensive face, like an angel of consolation, wherever helplessness, or pain, or suffering of any kind are to be met. It suffers with the missionary on the far-off shore, as it reads of his hardships and his anxieties, and with the myriad of souls still lying in the shadow of death, and famishing for want of pastors to break to them the Bread of Life. But perhaps it reserves its keenest pang of all for those who place themselves so far beyond the reach of help that not even prayer can obtain an answer in their behalf, and who shut themselves up in the hard self-made prison of their own perverse wills, bound with chains from which they cannot be delivered, because they choose not. Such are some of the objects upon which supernatural compassion expends itself, perpetuating thus upon earth one of those beautiful vocations which the Incarnation first rendered visible amongst men, and by which He, in Whose Divine Person supernatural compassion shone forth in all its perfection, has, age after age, drawn all faithful hearts to Himself.

The climax of the anguish of compassion is attained when we see ourselves incapable of helping those whose sufferings we feel so keenly. This was one of our Lady's most cruel torments, especially during the Passion of her Son, although long before, in Bethlehem and Egypt and Nazareth, she had known its exceeding bitterness, not only on account of our Lord, but also for the sake of her chaste spouse, St. Joseph, to whom her Divine Maternity was in divers ways so fruitful of suffering. But when she beheld her tender Child dragged and goaded through the streets by ruffian hands, when she saw Him fall beneath the weight of His Cross, when she heard Him proclaim aloud His thirst as He hung suspended on it, in all these circumstances she, who above every other had a right to afford Him relief, could not approach Him, but could only look on and see Him suffer more and yet more intensely. Oh, then indeed, the anguish of her compassion attained its supreme height, and her tears were as tears of blood wrung from her broken heart. But vast as was the sorrow of the Virgin Daughter of Sion, springing forth from the deep source of her compassion, it was as a drop only compared to that limitless ocean of sorrow which filled the Soul of her Divine Son. As she could not descend to the depths of His knowledge, so she could not attain to the heights of His love, and this love we are now considering as the second source to which may be traced the immensity of our Lord's compassion. Let us then reflect for a moment upon what that compassion throughout His life must have been, when it was aggravated by the permanent view of all suffering, which not even Jesus the Eternal Word, in the almost infinite power possessed by Him as Man through His union with the Word, could remedy. He

saw countless souls who, by the malice of their free-will, held fast His hands so that He could not loose the fetters which sin had riveted upon them. He saw all the miseries, temporal and eternal, which their sins had brought upon them; and, most terrible of all, He saw that they preferred those miseries rather than renounce their sinful cause. Yet He loved each one of these wretched beings as no mother ever loved the most cherished of her children. The love of mother and father, and brother and friend, and spouse, all met united in His Heart; and, mingling with and towering above them all, was His own love as Saviour and Redeemer of men. Then add to this His love of men, as their Creator and their God, and let us sum up the whole by the question: How boundless must have been the extent of His compassion?

A third source still remains whence flows the boundless compassion of our Lord, and this is the personal experience through which He became familiar, by degrees and with the help of His senses, and through a life spent amongst creatures, with every misery incidental to the nature He had assumed. It is in this sense chiefly that it is said: "Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men."¹ Neither His beatific nor His infused knowledge could admit any real increase, since He possessed them in their plenitude from the beginning, although He allowed them to manifest themselves exteriorly in proportion as He increased in age, so far as was consistent with His state of humiliation here below. It is indeed true that the knowledge of which we are now treating was acquired, but in a manner far different from the usual acceptance of the word. In Him such acquisition was

¹ St. Luke ii. 52.

originally and indirectly drawn from the depths of His interior knowledge, "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."¹ This was perfect from the first instant of His conception, whilst His experience through external contact was acquired, as He advanced, by the medium of external agents, although He could learn nothing for the first time either from angels or from men. The Son of God had from all eternity looked forth from His Father's bosom, and He "had compassion on the multitude." He sympathized with them, He pitied them, for they were the work of His hands; but there was something which His love still craved, something which Heaven itself could not bestow. He could not Himself share in the miseries of His children, He could not suffer with them. So He descended upon earth and became their Brother, and for their sakes made Himself an exile, forming one of the great human family that He might experience for Himself, and in Himself, their sorrows. Thus it was that the tender pity, the compassionateness of the Everlasting God became compassion, in which every poor suffering child of Adam has his share, and, if he so wills it, his surpassing consolation. As we have seen, there is no form of human suffering of which our Lord was not fully cognizant, through the knowledge with which His Soul was either supernaturally endowed or naturally made acquainted. We have now to consider how, by His actual share in our sufferings, He acquired His experimental knowledge of them, and how that experience enters into the economy of God's tender mercy and providence in regard to us. Once more let it be borne in mind, that the experimental knowledge of our Lord is not to be understood as something distinct

¹ Coloss. ii. 3.

from His acquired knowledge. He knew all things as God, and His Human Soul, receiving extraordinary powers by its Hypostatic Union with the Word, knew likewise all things, independently of that personal experience which He made of the infirmities of our nature. He knew therefore from eternity what His sufferings as Man would be, but He could not in His Divine Essence make the actual experience of those sufferings. He knew from the first instant of His conception, by means of the beatific and infused knowledge with which His Soul was then replenished, all that was in store for Him throughout His mortal life. But, submitting to the ordinary laws of the nature He had assumed, He would make the actual experience of those things, by degrees however, and through the medium of external agents, just as other men.

Jesus was the "Man of Sorrows" by excellence, for He bore in His own Person the griefs and infirmities of us all. There is no limit either to the number or the kind of His sufferings: "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest before God."¹ Without sin Himself, He yet endured the penalty of sin, that so He might make experience of all our infirmities. Not only therefore does He know, but by His own experience He has felt, every species of anguish of which the soul of man is capable, every sorrow of which his heart is susceptible, every torment of which his body is the victim—facts which cannot be too constantly remembered. The crushing agony of unrequited love, the bitter weariness of disappointment in works of Divine im-

¹ Hebrews ii. 17.

portance, the chafing of humiliation in all its varied forms, are familiar to His mind and Heart. Then, in the body, the cruel tension and quivering of the muscles and the nerves, the agony of the throbbing brain, and the torture of the fevered blood, as it rushes with unnatural swiftness through the swollen veins—these and every other suffering, together with those inflicted by external causes, as heat, cold, hunger, thirst, accidental injuries too—all these have been tested by the Incarnate Son of God before they have been laid on us, as every inward sorrow has first pressed upon His Sacred Heart, before it has reached our own.

It may be asked, how is it possible that our Lord could endure every form of suffering to which we are susceptible, since so many of these forms come from the imperfection of our souls, and of our bodily frame, whereas He was perfect in both, neither could sin or disease approach Him? To this it may be replied, that He had, in taking our nature, brought Himself under obligation to its laws; that He had moreover taken upon Himself the fearful penalty of every sin which had been or should be committed throughout the whole course of time, from the sin of our first parents until the day of doom. He was as “the emissary-goat” sent forth into the wilderness of this world, bearing the sins of the people.¹ He was the universal penitent “by Whose bruises we are healed.”² In order to feel all the horror and weight of the penance that was laid upon Him, He wrought a stupendous miracle by which He restrained all the plenitude of grace and glory which resided in His Soul, so that it did not flow into the lower part thereof, nor into **His Body**; both which were thus left free to be acted

¹ *Levit. xvi. 21.*

² *Isaias liii. 5.*

upon by the same natural dispositions and accidents, as the souls and bodies of other men are. In connection with the actual experience which our Lord made of our misery, we are reminded of the infinite wisdom and mercy of God in constituting His Incarnate Son the Judge of all men, at least so far as the final Judgment is concerned. For then shall the "Man of Sorrows" be seen coming once more in His Human Nature, with His five glorified Wounds shining like suns, and then in the presence of all creation shall the justice of His Judgment be made manifest. "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son."¹ As He came and made Himself one of us, that He might "bear our infirmities and carry our sorrows," and thus be able to "have compassion on us," so He has been appointed our Judge, that His justice may be tempered by the exceeding compassion which His personal experience of our miseries has superadded to the sympathy already flowing from His supernatural knowledge and from His boundless love. If we could but once realize the "breadth and length, and height and depth" of the compassion of our Divine Lord, we should be in possession of a source of consolation, the exhaustless riches of which we have never conceived.

But we should, above all, recall to our minds Christ's experimental knowledge of everything that we can suffer, in order to make of Him our Friend, our Confidant, and our Comforter; in order, moreover, to moderate that inherent dread of suffering, which is common to our nature. If we are poor, so was Jesus: "Poor and in labours from His youth." If we are subject to humiliation, who of us ever experienced

¹ St. John v. 22.

humiliation in all its aggravating varieties as did the Son of God made Man for us? "Despised and the most abject of men." If our lives are one continued succession of sorrows, Jesus was the "Man of Sorrows," bearing in His own Heart the sorrows of all mankind. Are physical pain and suffering our portion? Let us look on Him in Whose Sacred Body "from the sole of the feet to the crown of the head there was no soundness," and Whom "the Lord was pleased to bruise in infirmity." If our most generous endeavours in God's service seem to fail of any success, Jesus died in the utterance of that cry which so touchingly reveals His unsatisfied desire for souls: "I thirst." If the dread of suffering overwhelms us, and the terrors of death surround us, Jesus has vouchsafed even to share our fear in admitting the same into His own Sacred Heart, and experiencing all its torments, for we read, "And He began to fear and to be heavy." Should the consciousness of the penalties which our sins deserve affright us, and the loathsomeness of sin lie with all its sickening weight upon our hearts, Jesus, in taking our sins upon Himself, has seen, yea felt, the terrible fulfilment in Himself of the expiation which they demanded, till the vision of the hideousness and foulness clung to His sinless and blessed Soul as though He were indeed the guilty penitent, and not simply the innocent Victim. And if, being abandoned by all, we seem to be finally deserted by God, Jesus in His utmost need was forsaken by those whom He had trusted most—"Then the disciples all leaving Him fled," and before death He felt the supreme bitterness of one Who was abandoned by His Heavenly Father. How precious then to our remembrance must be the thought of the actual experience our Divine

Lord made of all our miseries, since it is one of the sources of His tender compassion for us, and draws Him so closely to our hearts by reason of the infirmity with which He was Himself encompassed.

Again, Jesus knew all things as the Word and as Man, by reason of the riches of knowledge which His Soul enjoyed, in consequence of its Hypostatic Union with the Word. This, amongst other causes, constitutes the infinite difference existing between the compassion extended to us by Jesus, and that shown by the most tender of mothers. How frequently in sorrow or sickness does not the thought occur to us: "Ah! if they only knew this or that circumstance, how much more gentle they would be, how much kinder their judgment." Let us, in our turn, not judge others too harshly. They cannot "know all things." This belongs to God alone, Who in the infirmity of His Human Nature experienced all things. Therefore "not as man judgeth, doth God judge." How frequently also does not variableness, for example, in those enduring physical suffering, wear the appearance of caprice. There may be more than the appearance of it in many cases, but as frequently such variableness is the inevitable accompaniment of ill-health. Independently of the will, the poor sufferer cannot take the food to-day which yesterday was welcome to him; and the position, which was relief yesterday, is positive torture to-day. There is one Who can probe all this, and knows it experimentally, and He sees the prick, as it were, upon the heart of the sufferer when the variableness over which he has no control is, without intentional unkindness, ascribed to whim and caprice. In sorrow again, and the multitudinous varieties of mental suffering, how often they seem to others to

be exaggerated by the imagination of him who feels their presence. The secret thorns are, in fact, invisible to every eye, save one—the agony of prolonged tension, the wearisomeness of accumulated cares, these, added perhaps to a life-long grief, are known only to Jesus. Hence the abyss lying between His compassion and that of ordinary men. The inadequacy of human sympathy—beautiful as that sympathy is in itself—is a fact recognized by all. But few perhaps trace that inadequacy to its source, and fewer still, whilst they perceive that it is an inevitable consequence of the finite knowledge of man, resolve to seek consolation and strength in Him Whose compassion is boundless, because He “knoweth all things.”

Another distinction to be noticed between the compassion of our Divine Lord and that of men like ourselves, is its universality. We find many who can compassionate the poor, or those suffering from physical maladies, but whose sympathy is scarcely stirred by such as are pressed down by inward sorrow. With other persons this order is reversed. Men seem to have their favourite objects of sympathy and compassion, just as they choose arbitrarily recipients for their active charity or almsgiving. It is not so with Jesus. Wherever human suffering is found, to that spot His eye is with special tenderness attracted; while towards sufferers of every kind, without distinction, His Heart opens itself out, being “touched with compassion.”

But of all the forms of mental suffering which the children of Adam inherit, temptation is that one which meets indeed with least compassion from their fellow-men, but most nearly touches the sinless Heart of Jesus. St. Paul thus exhorts his brethren: “If a man

be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”¹ He further tells them to “bear one another’s burdens,” for so they shall “fulfil the law of Christ.” From this exhortation we gather the important truth that it is those who are most “spiritual” who will be the most compassionate for others, as well as the most humble in themselves, remembering their own frailty and liability to fall. Christ our Lord, the sinless one, Who could not err, He the Head of all those “who are spiritual,” and the living source of their sanctity, has more compassion for the tempted than all the saints of God. He exhibited it in His mortal life, as we shall presently meditate; He makes His tender compassion felt, at this day, in the secret of hearts, being purified within the crucible of temptation; and nothing is more clearly set forth in the Sacred Scriptures than His very particular compassion for those so tried. We are told that wherein “He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted.”² Let us be assured “we have not a High Priest Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.”³ He it is “Who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err, because He Himself also is compassed with infirmity.” “And, whereas indeed He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”⁴ By all these passages we learn that our Lord, in His human flesh, did in truth vouchsafe to experience the attacks of temptation from without, although such temptation could meet with no

¹ Galat. v. 1.² Hebrews ii. 18.³ Hebrews iv. 15.⁴ Hebrews v. 2, 8.

correspondence within His blessed Soul. If we keep this clearly before us, we shall recognize that, although there was humiliation to the last degree in our Lord's condescension to experience the suggestions of the evil one, yet, as St. Gregory observes, there was for Him in this no indignity. He willed it, just as He, in His infinite self-abnegation, willed His other sufferings, in order that He might be "in all things" like to us, and that we might overcome our temptations by help of His temptations, as we should also triumph over death through His Death.

Be this, however, always remembered in the matter of temptation, that whereas our Lord could only be acted upon by exterior agents, we, having within us the germ of concupiscence, meet the enemy half-way and play into his hands.¹ This being understood, we may freely repose our souls, worn out with the noon day heat of temptation, on the Heart of Him Who has first taken the burden upon Himself, and has experienced its galling weight. O blessed love of Jesus! which would thus provide for Thy poor creatures a refreshment so far surpassing all they could have dared to expect. The wise heart "knoweth the bitterness of his own soul," we are told, "and in his joy the stranger shall not intermeddle."² All are strangers to the exceeding bitterness of the soul's temptations, except that one Who knoweth all things, and before Whose clear eye our secret agonies lie open; and He is touched

¹ "Quia de carnis peccato propagati, in nobis ipsis etiam gerimus unde certamina toleramus. Deus vero, qui in utero Virginis incarnatus, in mundum sine peccato venerat, nihil contradictionis in semetipso tolerabat. Tentari ergo per suggestionem potuit; sed ejus mentem peccati delectatio non momordit. Atque ideo omnis diabolica illa tentatio foris, non intus, fuit." (Hom. 16, S. Gregorii Papa, *In Evang. Matt.*)

² Prov. xiv. 10.

with compassion, seeing with far other eyes than those with which men see. There may be failure for a time, and this much men see; but Jesus has witnessed the attempts, the struggles, the secret anguish, the aggravations, the pressure, and the strain, and He has taken count of all, and He has suffered with His poor weak child, and the last great day alone shall reveal how far His compassion will temper His judgment, when He comes to decide our doom. And now it is high time that we should consider how this beautiful feature was manifested in our Lord during His sojourn upon earth.

St. Matthew, whose primary idea in writing his Gospel appears to have been that of drawing attention to the fulfilment of prophecy in the Person of our Lord, makes pointed and frequent allusion to His compassion. The Evangelist seems to have delighted in thus tacitly reminding us that the "Elect One," spoken of by Isaias as He Who would "not break the bruised reed" nor "quench the smoking flax," Who would "open the eyes of the blind, and bring forth the prisoner out of prison," had indeed come and exercised His office manifestly before men.¹ Thus we hear him telling us that, "seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed and lying like sheep that have no shepherd."² Again, "coming forth, He saw a great multitude (who had followed Him on foot out of the cities), and had compassion on them and healed their sick," in whose favour also He wrought the first miracle of the multiplication of loaves.³ In the following chapter we read that Jesus called His disciples together in order to tell them of the compassion He felt for the multitude because they had

¹ Isaias xlii. 1, 3, 7.

² St. Matt. ix. 36.

³ St. Matt. xiv. 14.

continued with Him three days and had not what to eat, so that He made this the occasion of His second miracle of the loaves. Again, in respect of the two blind men at Jericho, "Jesus, having compassion on them, touched their eyes, and immediately they saw."¹ But while St. Matthew so frequently makes actual mention of this most attractive feature in our Lord's character, it is abundantly illustrated by all the Evangelists, and indeed the entire Gospel narrative is steeped in the inner spirit of its beauty. All recognized it in our Lord, even when their faith in Him was far from being either living or fruitful. We learn this by the solicitude with which the people in general sought to bring under His notice their sick and infirm, whenever they knew of His approach, and by the simple confidence with which they, at the first sight of Him, disclosed to Him their troubles. "The dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed—and many others," as St. Matthew so suggestively adds, "they brought and cast down at His feet," and He did not disappoint them in their expectation, for "He healed them all."²

The extent also to which His well-known compassion was sought, is convincing proof of the confidence which the people placed in Him. Piteous stories were narrated which were sure to touch His Heart. As, for instance, when the father of the lunatic boy came entreating Him to have pity on his son, he poured forth in sad detail his poor child's sufferings into the compassionate ear of the loving Saviour: "Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic and suffereth much: for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water." And then, as ever, the divinely human compassion of Jesus prompted His reassuring

¹ St. Matt. xx. 34.

² St. Matt. xv. 30.

words: "Bring him hither to Me," and the cure was instantly effected.¹ St. Mark gives us still fuller particulars of the tender sympathy of our Lord, by recording the questions He vouchsafed to put, with all the solicitude of a deeply interested physician, as to the length of time the child had been thus afflicted. "And He asked his father, How long time is it since this hath happened unto him?" To which the father replied as above stated, with the addition of the persuasive appeal: "But if Thou canst do anything, help us, having compassion on us."² Now St. Luke even adds to the force of the father's plaintive appeal to our Lord's tenderness of Heart: "Master, I beseech Thee look upon my son, because he is my only one."³ This was a motive which must have had peculiar weight with our Lord; and St. Luke, that most tender of all the Evangelists, in his care to omit no one point that could in any way bring out in still stronger relief the beauty and sweetness of our Lord's character, fails not to remark it in the history of the widow of Naim. In working this miracle the compassion of Jesus appears to centre much more upon the person of the widowed and childless mother, than on the body of her son whom He was about to restore to life. We seem to read in the exquisitely beautiful narrative of an event recorded only by St. Luke, the testimony of one who had thoroughly penetrated the depths of the Heart of his Divine Master, and who instinctively discerns how the widow, mourning her only son, vividly represented to Jesus His own Blessed and broken-hearted Mother. It could not be so long after this event ere she would have to mourn over her only Son

¹ St. Matt. xvii. 16, 17.

² St. Mark ix. 20, 21.

³ St. Luke ix. 38.

and bathe the wounds upon His dead Body with the tears that none could stay. "Behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." No verbal appeal was in this case made to our Lord's compassion, and none was needed, for the funeral procession had no sooner met His eye, headed by that widowed mother dissolved in tears, than "being moved with mercy towards her, He said to her: Weep not," and then, approaching the bier, raised her dead son to life. "And He gave him to his mother."¹ Throughout the narrative we see how Jesus was touched by all the circumstances—the widowhood of the mother, the fact of the dead man being her only son, the irrepressible flow of her tears, and finally, the relief with which it filled His compassionate Heart to be able, in this case at least, to restore at once to the sorrowing mourner the son whom she wept as dead and lost to her, until He gave him back alive and well to his mother's arms. If the compassion of Jesus was so great for this sad mother, and if, as we cannot but believe, His thoughts reverted definitely and distinctly to His own Blessed Mother, how inconceivably more deep, tender, and all-absorbing must have been by anticipation His compassion for her. Might we not find in this, one predominant incentive to the Saviour's sorrow in union with the grief of the mother of Naim, when we are told that He said to her: "Woman, weep not."

Nor is this the only instance wherein we have distinct record of the power which the sight of human sorrow possessed over the tender Heart of the Man-God. There are many such, but one stands out so prominently in the sacred narrative that we cannot

¹ St. Luke vii. 13—15.

pass it by unnoticed. Need we mention the scene of the raising of Lazarus, as St. John narrates it. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." They knew this well, and so the sisters appealed to that love, rightly judging that from it would spring tender compassion for His friend's sickness as soon as He was told of it. Our Lord had been "moved with compassion" when He told His disciples, "Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." He was still more affected when Martha met Him and intimated to Him that if He had been there her brother had not died, words which drew from Jesus the assurance that her brother should rise again. But His compassion reached its height when He beheld Mary at His feet weeping, and repeating her sister's words. The tears of the penitent, now transformed into an ardent lover of her Divine Master, wholly won His Heart, and drew from It a fresh manifestation of the depths of Its tender sympathy and compassion for those who mourn. "Jesus therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself." And when He saw the place where Lazarus was laid, "Jesus wept."¹

We see once more, in the case of the man at the Probatic Pool, how quick the eye of Jesus was to descry the most pitiable cases amongst the afflicted who were waiting there to obtain relief. Many of them were infirm, but there was only one probably who had been languishing there for eight-and-thirty years. "Him, when Jesus had seen lying, and knew that he had been now a long time, He saith to him: Wilt thou be made whole?" The reply was peculiarly

¹ St. John xi. 5, 33.

fitted to touch the Heart of our Lord, Who so anxiously asked the question: "Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool; for, whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me."¹ Even to our insensible hearts there is something inexpressibly touching in these words, disclosing so faithfully the hopeless impotence of paralysis, and the utter dependence upon others in which it involves its victims. How, then, must they have appealed to Him of Whose compassion ours is but the faintest shadow. We would have to recapitulate the whole Gospel history were we to attempt to recall every instance illustrative of this beautiful feature in our Divine Lord's character, but sufficient has been said regarding His compassion for the afflicted, to suggest the remembrance of it in our reading and meditation.

When the centurion besought Jesus with such earnestness to heal his servant who was sick of the palsy, it was this same loving compassion which urged our Lord to announce so immediately: "I will come and heal him." It did not satisfy the prompting of His tender sympathy to heal the sick man at a distance. He would at least show His willingness to go, and if need be, bestow care and attention upon the sufferer, over and above working his cure. It was compassion also which led Him to heal Peter's wife's mother, whose house He had entered, and who lay sick of a fever, "Whom when He had seen He touched, and the fever left her."² His great compassion again induced Him to grant so readily the prayers of those who at evening-tide brought to Him the possessed and the sick; all of whom He healed, in order that, as St. Matthew says, "it might

¹ St. John v. 5—7.

² St. Matt. viii. 7, 15.

be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaias the Prophet, saying: He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."¹ If we kept this more constantly in view, the Gospel histories would possess much more attractiveness for us, because they would give us a much clearer and deeper insight into the beauty of Jesus, and would afford us a far richer consolation in bearing our own personal sorrows and afflictions. We should realize, in studying the details of the cure of the blind, the lame, and the sick, and each particular circumstance attending these, the whole character and action of the compassion of Jesus for every form of woe. We should make ourselves most intimate with that compassion, and should learn to confide in it and be consoled by the thought of it, when pressed down by our sufferings and griefs, well knowing that He Who trod our earth and went about, not only doing good, but most truly sympathizing and suffering along with His afflicted brethren, is the same Jesus Who had Himself passed into the Heavens through the gate of suffering. We should know how to raise our eyes and hearts to Heaven, and behold Him now seated there at the right hand of God His Father, looking down with compassion on our infirmities and sympathizing with our sorrows, because that He was, during the days of His mortality, compassed round about by those very infirmities, inasmuch as He had taken them upon Himself.

The same thought should accompany us when we read of His merciful dealing with poor sinners. Was there no compassion in His Heart as His eye rested on the penitent Magdalen when, in the agony of her grief, she cowered at His feet and bathed them with

¹ St. Matt. viii. 17.

her tears? Was there no room for compassion in His breast, as the woman taken in adultery stood before Him, overcome with shame while she listened to the charges of her accusers? And was not His Soul "troubled," was it not a prey to the anguish of compassion for the deluded populace whom He beheld so misguided by their rulers as to become aiders and abettors with them in rejecting and persecuting Him, Who came to give them life? Oh! let us not doubt it. The Heart of Jesus experienced in all these instances, and in every similar one, spread out in clear vision before Him until the end of time, such pangs of tenderest compassion as far distanced the love of fondest mother. One example alone will abundantly illustrate His exceeding compassion for those who are tempted, as well as His great solicitude to avert from them some critical test under which there may be imminent danger of their succumbing. It was the distinct knowledge, which our Lord possessed, of what was passing through the minds of His Apostles on the night before the commencement of the Passion. This was the knowledge which, as we have considered when treating of the beauty of our Lord's silence, so effectually sealed His lips. The minions of the High Priests and the Pharisees, led on by the traitor Judas, had surrounded Jesus in the Garden, and in answer to His question: Whom they sought, they had replied that it was Himself they came to seize. The Apostles were standing near, and their loud protestations of fidelity were still ringing in their Master's ear. They had been fortified by the Supersubstantial Bread which He, with His own hand, had given them, only a few short hours before; and yet the three most favoured of their number had already fallen asleep, instead of

sharing in His watchfulness. He knew, for He had been careful to warn them, that "if the spirit indeed is willing, the flesh is weak." Their very countenances now bore painful testimony to their weak faith and waning courage, though His quick eye detected it all without that help. His Heart was "touched with compassion" for His immediate followers. He was satisfied of their good-will, but He knew well how terror might seize upon them and perchance vanquish them at the decisive moment. Wherefore, as one full of anxiety for their safety, He said to the soldiers: "I have told you that I am He, if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way."¹ This is but a single example of the manner in which our Lord would most certainly act, in His tender compassion for souls that are tempted. We may be sure that what He did then He has done on countless occasions, and under every varied form, in behalf of ourselves. We cannot discern as yet when and how His intervention has occurred, but we shall recognize one day that, when our "feet were almost moved, our steps had well-nigh slipped,"² we should have fallen a prey to temptation but for the compassion of Him Who "also was compassed with infirmity," and therefore knew by actual experience the nature of our misery. We shall one day acknowledge that it was His hand which either moderated its strength, or, in consideration of our weakness, wholly withdrew the danger from our path.

Eternity alone can ever reveal to us the extent of the compassion which our Lord felt for the unhappy Jews when, on the occasion of His final teaching in the Temple, just before His Passion, He went forth from the sacred edifice a rejected Teacher, an un-

¹ St. John xviii. 8, 9.

² Psalm lxxii. 2.

crowned King. "And Jesus being come out of the Temple, went away."¹ Thoughts fertile for meditation spring up within us as we watch Him sitting on Mount Olivet, over against the Temple, conversing confidentially with His Apostles, and predicting to them the terrible judgments which were to follow. Not in anger were those predictions uttered, rather were they wrung from the intense compassion with which His Heart was filled when contemplating the inevitable results of His rejection by His own chosen people. His pent-up feelings seemed to force themselves into speech, as He conversed with those who loved Him best, and who had themselves gathered round Him, begging for a reply: "Master, tell us, when shall these things be?"² Thus has it been ever since. In sorrow and compassion rather than in anger has Jesus, finding Himself and His truth rejected by nations and countries, withdrawn from them to seek elsewhere a more grateful soil upon which to expend His labour. It was the same with our own dear land three centuries ago, to which once more He seems to be, timidly as it were, offering advances, as though He yearned to come back and live again in the heart of the long desolate nation. Can it finally be thus with France, dear, noble, apostolic France, from whence, till recently, the great majority of Catholic works of charity and zeal have emanated? Will she at last drive Him finally to abandon her, having expelled His chosen friends, robbed His little ones of their rightful heritage, effaced from sight the very emblem of salvation, and suppressed the Name, as she has denied the existence, of the God of hosts? We cannot say whether the tears, the supplications, and the sacrifices of those who

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 1.² St. Mark xiii. 2-4.

still form the heart of that great nation will prevail over the power of darkness. But if unhappily it ever comes to pass that France should lose the faith, Jesus will withdraw from it, as He withdrew from the Temple at the end of His Ministry, with His Heart, so to speak, broken in the struggles of His compassion to avert her doom.

We have not yet exhausted the several characteristics of our Blessed Lord's compassion, all contributing to enhance the lustre of its beauty. We have now to describe its permanence. It was not simply in the moment of its external exercise that it existed, or even attained its supreme point of fellow-feeling. To develop this mark we must again remember that Jesus as God knew all things, not successively, but simultaneously. He required no accumulation of circumstances either to call forth or to increase the flame of His compassion. Even as Man, by reason of His marvellous privileges resulting from His Hypostatic Union with the Word, it was the same. Thus, when our Lord delayed the granting any petition proceeding from those who sought His help, as in the case of the Syro-Phenician woman, and others, His Heart was all the while overflowing with compassion; and the sweetness of this must, we think, have partially revealed itself, even whilst His words were designed to try their faith, seeing that His object was at the same time to nourish it.

Another, and very important feature in our Lord's compassion was, as has previously been shown, its universality. In illustrating this point of beauty in His character, we are not speaking of His zeal, a distinction which we make because it frequently occurs that amongst men the two are mixed up together.

Now, we may be zealous for the salvation of souls, and for their greater perfection, and yet be able to claim but little of the compassion so remarkable in our Lord. Even though our zeal should be real and like that of Jesus, and therefore replete with tenderness, we may still be lacking in true compassion at sight of the temporal miseries of our brethren, a trait which was so especially beautiful in Jesus, and has been reflected in so wonderful a manner in some of the chosen ones among the saints. There are likewise zealous persons whose compassion for the temporal sufferings of their fellow-creatures becomes suddenly dried up, if they hear that one whom they have hitherto assisted has been discovered to be a notorious sinner, or otherwise undeserving of commendation. But in all this they differ sadly from our Lord, Who compassionated and relieved those whom He could not commend, as we learn over and over again from the Gospels.

In many of His parables we have our Lord's compassion reflected no less clearly than in His actions. It is His Father Who is ever shadowed forth in those mysterious teachings, and it seems to be our Lord's dearest aim to make known in them to men that Father's compassionate love for His creatures, and His yearning to obtain their confidence. How could all this be more distinctly expressed than in the most striking Parable of the Prodigal, in whose history we seem to feel the longing of the father's heart over his poor lost son, which would not let him rest, but he must go forth to meet him whilst "yet he was a great way off." Often had the father pictured to himself his erring child, homeless, friendless, and perishing with hunger; and his heart had gone out to him in his desire to see him back again. And now when his

eye caught sight of the person of his son actually returning, but so denuded of the robes which once became him, his countenance so marked and seared with the traces of want and misery, as he approached in his humiliation to cast himself at his father's feet, oh! then indeed was the paternal heart strongly "moved with compassion."¹ He could not refrain from hastening towards the long lost child, that, falling on his neck, he might bestow on him the kiss of forgiveness which he had so long desired to give. The Parable of the Good Samaritan exhibits the like tender compassion for suffering, and for all the other consequences of sin. Nor let us fail to discern a design on the part of our Lord to make known to us, under a figure, the all-merciful and all-forgiving character of His Father, that He may awaken in our breast springs of true love towards Him. The details also which He gives of suffering in the images employed by Him, present an unconscious confession of the minute sympathies dwelling in His own compassionate Heart, and its extreme sensitiveness to all our miseries.

In the last place, our Lord's compassion was so beautiful because it was so Divine. Unlike the pity of men, which is but a semblance of true compassion, and often appears to be little more than a garment thrown lightly over us, instead of being an exterior manifestation and spontaneous outgrowth of a hidden life within, the compassionating love of Jesus poured itself out and could neither be restrained nor exhausted, however long it was taxed, or however little deserving were those on whom it was lavished. What further proof could we have of the perfection of the Humanity of our Lord, or the tenderness of His human Heart?

¹ St. Luke xv. 20.

How could He bear more incontestable testimony to the truth of His Divinity whereby He was one with the Father, and came to be Himself the living example of His Father's perfections, and to manifest the same before men. True compassion, wherever it shows itself, is a rich and bright reflection of one of the beautiful gifts which the Incarnate Word brought down from Heaven; and far more brilliantly would it shine forth before men if our hearts more closely resembled the Heart of Jesus, or drank in His spirit, and lived after the pattern of His life. But even for our own sakes, well will it be for us if, by reading or re-reading the Gospel history, and by habitual meditation thereon, the compassion of Jesus becomes familiarized to our minds and hearts, so that we can turn spontaneously to it in our various troubles and afflictions. It is His wish we should do so, since He has given us the invitation: "Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

All of us have a Red Sea of sorrow, and pain, and anxious fears to pass through before entering the Promised Land. All of us have a *fiat* to pronounce which will cost us many a struggle. Happy indeed shall we be if we have made a friend of Him Who knows, both as God and as Man, the anguish of every tear that we may shed, of every agony we may have to endure; and in Whose tender compassion we may rest securely, and there find all the strength and consolation we can need.

CHAPTER XX.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS PRAYER.

And He passed the whole night in the prayer of God (St. Luke vi. 12).

IN approaching the subject before us, it is obvious that the matter is in itself so lofty, and the ground on which we must tread so sacred, that we can in truth venture to say but little regarding it, beyond what is of a very imperfect and superficial character. In reading the Lives of the Saints, we are frequently obliged to acknowledge that we can obtain but mere glimpses of their real interior life, of their spiritual life, as it lies clear and plain before the eye of God, being that life which they led with and in Him alone. We may attain some idea of their interior character, of their predilections, of the direction in which their spiritual attractions lay, of their devotions and pious practices, and these reveal, to a certain extent, much that is passing within their souls. But beneath all this are depths which we cannot fathom, fountains of sanctity which we have never known of, and from these flow hidden streams of heroic graces and virtues, far out of sight in the remote recesses of the soul, reserved for and seen by God alone.

There is within each of us a "holy of holies," into which the great High Priest alone may enter. In some, indeed, this inner sanctuary has been desecrated,

but we are not at present speaking of such persons. We have now to do only with the saints and servants of God, within whose hearts He dwells as in His living temple—those who jealously guard the most holy place on the altar, within which burns the perpetual fire of prayer and praise. It is this “holy of holies” within the soul that is the scene of those secret communings with God, those voiceless words, those inspirations of Divine grace, those ineffaceable impressions, which can never receive outward expression, and the actual existence of which can only be conjectured from a sudden unpremeditated flash of light, imparting a heavenly lustre to some gesture or expression of countenance which, like the face of Moses when he descended from the mount, has indicated the communing of the soul in secret “conversation with the Lord.”¹ In certain of the saints these communications have produced ecstasy and other marvellous effects. In others they have momentarily found vent in words, exclamations, and pious aspirations, uttered without the consciousness of the speakers themselves; as it was with Moses, who “knew not that his face was horned.” Yet all such outward marks are but the faintest reflex of the spiritual emotions active beneath the surface, and no more reveal the reality of the life “hid with Christ in God,” and the conversation which the soul holds with Him, than do the flakes of sea-foam that crust the waves give hint of the world of life and movement hidden in the fathomless depths beneath. What is true of the saints may be said with far greater truth of Him Who was both God and Man. If with the saints prayer is not merely a duty discharged, an occupation reserved for stated intervals, places,

¹ Exodus xxxiv. 29.

and circumstances, but rather an uninterrupted intercourse, a necessity, so to speak, of their nature, arising from the intensity of their love, and the imperious force with which it impels them to commune with Him Whose beauty has captivated their hearts, we may at once recognize the nature of the prayer which Jesus the Man-God offered up, and acknowledge that it must lie in regions far beyond, and above, our faintest comprehension. It is exclusively the property of His created nature, and of this it may well be called the richest gem in the crown of its perfection. It was as Man that He would "ask the Father" to give us another Paraclete, Who should abide with us for ever.¹

Nevertheless, although our Lord's prayer, devotion, and self-immolation—for all these things in Him are one—may be accounted virtues absolutely appertaining to His Humanity, yet were they at the same time so penetrated with the unction of His Divinity, as to render the practice and character of prayer in Him unlike anything to be found in the saints. His act of prayer is glorified, through the Hypostatic Union, in its necessary conformity with His Divine Nature, and its association with His Divine Person. Notwithstanding this, our Lord's prayer was pre-eminently true, earnest, and human, a point which we cannot keep too constantly before us. It frequently happens that indistinct or even erroneous notions cunningly insinuate themselves into our reflections upon this matter, seeing that our ideas are confused, and suggest to us that the absence of a human person in our Lord militates against the perfection of His Human Nature. The fact, however, is far otherwise. Our Lord's Humanity is perfect in its every part, possessing all

¹ St. John xiv. 16.

the conditions of a created nature, to the exclusion solely of a created person. The absence of this involves no defect in the Sacred Humanity, which retains all the properties and peculiarities of a created nature, in their utmost possible perfection. It is highly important to remember this truth, and to realize it in our meditations, not only that we may prevent any vague and erroneous ideas being formed in connection with our Lord's Humanity, but also may avoid another evil, namely, that of regarding Him as practically placed beyond the pale of imitation.

We have not erred in saying that prayer offered by ourselves, or even by the highest of the saints, can never rise to be what it was in Jesus. Nevertheless, a proportionate imitation in this, as in all other respects, is quite possible. And if we attentively regard the lives of the saints and of holy persons, we shall discern in them special resemblances to our Lord, owing to their spirit of prayer and abiding sense of His presence, and their uninterrupted intercourse with Him in the pre-occupation of their minds with everything that can promote or affect His glory. We shall see how in such persons all that is simply temporal is but of secondary importance; how swiftly, almost instantaneously, their will in each event flies up to unite itself with the Sovereign will, because this has become for them their very meat, and in its appointments they find nothing but what is most excellent, most lovable, and all-wise. We shall remark how, in their intercourse with men, and in the necessary discharge of the duties of their state of life, there seems to be ever a companion, not simply at their side, but abiding within their souls; one with whom they silently and secretly take sweet counsel, and whose invisible presence sheds

a genial radiance over their words and acts and whole demeanour, making them the reflection of His own Spirit of Love. Such men, too, are wont to steal quietly away when the service of others does not demand their presence, as intimate friends do to converse apart in a solitude which is world enough for them, because of the charm they find in each other's company. This is the simple reason why men of prayer are lovers of solitude, and willingly turn aside from the crowd. These are the men who grow like to Jesus, not so much by a studied imitation of Him, as by yielding themselves up unconsciously and instinctively to the very force of their love.

Let us now inquire how much it is possible to learn definitely respecting the nature of the prayer of our Blessed Lord. As has been said, His inner life was hidden in the bosom of His Father, except so far as He made manifestation of it to men by His words and by His actions. These His words and actions, however, are quite sufficient in number and distinctness to reveal the delicate and exquisite harmonies of thought and feeling which marked the Divine communings between the Heart of Jesus and His Heavenly Father. More than enough has passed from His lips, even if we did not know it from other sources, to give full utterance to that which pre-eminently occupied His Sacred Heart: Its devotion to His Eternal Father. Having dwelt upon this point in a previous chapter, we make only a passing allusion to it here, so far as it is connected with the matter under consideration. We hear Him praying aloud in the presence of others with the intention, it would seem, of half disclosing to them the manner of His prayer, in order to teach them how tender and how beautiful must be that Father-

Who delighted to be so addressed. Whether His prayer assumes the form of praise and thanksgiving, or of petition, whether it expresses His conformity with the Father's will, or entire abandonment of self into His hands, it is ever characterized by a most rare tenderness, drawing our own hearts irresistibly to the love of the Father Himself, and thus forming another channel by which we may approach Him through Jesus, according to the words: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me."¹ We ourselves know what strength and refreshment it is to our hearts, wearied with the consciousness of the serried armies of sin that are every instant directing their weapons of revolt against Heaven, if we can turn ourselves to our Heavenly Father, and there in His bosom hide, as it were, our griefs, begging of Him to accept the reparation of our love, and of our prayers to Him in secret. Surely this is a Divine habit learnt instinctively from the Heart of Jesus, and copied from His example, when, as He sorrowed over the hard-heartedness of those cities wherein He had wrought the most of His miracles, and upbraided them for not doing penance, we hear Him address His praise and thanksgiving to His Father, because He had "hidden these things"—that is, the knowledge of Himself—"from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight."² These two words, "Yea, Father," formed the unceasing language of His Sacred Heart, indicating the under-current which ran through all His thoughts and all His words; and it was, we may be assured, the external utterance of all His secret communings with the Father, even as it is the embodiment, in some form or

¹ St. John xiv. 6.² St. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

other, of the prayer addressed to Him by all in whom His Spirit abides, and whom it gently leads.

We have in the Gospels repeated testimony of the satisfaction with which our Lord withdrew from observation and went away into the mountains, or across the water to another shore, or into desert places, there to hold converse in secret with His Father. Although He communed at all times and uninterruptedly with God in Heaven, yet solitude could not fail to possess especial attractions for Him, seeing that in the eternal solitude, "before the world was," He had dwelt alone in the Father's bosom, where His supreme occupation was, and is, the contemplation of that Father's beauty, in the constant proceeding of the Holy Spirit through Whom the Divine Persons mutually communicate each one's love. Thus He Who, though perfect Man, was yet a Divine Person walking upon earth and infusing into His Humanity all that naturally flowed from so marvellous a union, continued here below the interior contemplation which had been His occupation all through the ages "before the world was." Wherefore the works that He did, He wrought not as men work, but as God works; and after performing them, "having dismissed the multitude, He went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, He was there alone."¹ Again "rising very early," after having on the previous evening performed many miracles and wrought many cures—"going out, He went into a desert place, and there He prayed."² So likewise "when the fame of Him went abroad" after His having healed the leper, and when "great multitudes came to Him, He retired into the desert, and prayed."³ Again, after the miracle of the loaves, having dismissed the

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 23.

² St. Mark i. 35.

³ St. Luke v. 15, 16.

multitude, "He went up to the mountain to pray."¹ Not only does the Gospel narrative remark that, after working His miracles, our Lord withdrew into solitude, there to commune with His Father in secret, but it moreover specially tells us that, before the great step of such vital importance to His future Church as the choosing of the Apostles, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God," and it was not until "day was come that He called unto Him His disciples, and chose twelve of them, whom He also named Apostles."²

Certainly our Lord, being Himself God, had no need of this retreat in order to seek light from on high, since He was in Himself the "Light of light" and the everlasting Word. Neither can we accept the rather shallow statement, contained in many books of meditation, that our Lord's almost exclusive object on these occasions was to afford an example for our imitation. Jesus acted upon this and the like occasions as Man—perfect Man, Whose Soul turned instinctively to the Father in Whom, with Whom, and for Whose glory He lived; Whose will was His meat, and Whose love was the joy of His Sacred Heart. He comported Himself as the Man Whose every act, every affection, was filled with the unction of the Divinity, to which His Humanity was so marvellously united that the habits of God shone forth in His human flesh. Now, no more distinctly Divine habit could exist than that wherein the several Persons of the Godhead communed with and contemplated one another, because this formed the eternal act of God before the world was. Hence our Lord, as the God-Man, perpetuated on earth an eternal habit, even when all the while He was obeying

¹ St. Luke vi. 12, 13.

² St. Mark vi. 46.

the instinct of His perfectly human Soul. We have here one of the many glimpses vouchsafed us of the spirit of piety which, together with all the other gifts He possessed, rested in their fullest plenitude within our Lord. This spirit inspired His every word and illumined it with a gentle beauty. It manifested itself in His compassion, for true compassion is the offspring of piety, without which it degenerates into a mere natural instinct of common pity. But we are now contemplating the character of piety in its highest form, as marking the habitual converse of the Son with His Eternal Father, and guiding His steps into solitude whenever the work, which that Father's glory required of Him, was being accomplished, there to commune with Him in secret, "in the prayer of God."¹ To His Father it was that our Lord turned, on the last night of His mortal life, when He had addressed His memorable and almost farewell words to the Twelve after the Last Supper. Troubled in Soul and sick at Heart, He spoke aloud to His Father in the presence of His Apostles, announcing the completion of the work that Father had given Him to do, and praying the Father to glorify Him with Himself, with the glory which the Son had with Him before the world was.² Beautiful beyond expression is the prayer which forms the whole of this chapter of St. John's Gospel. In it we gain the fullest possible acquaintance with that long-sustained argument of an account rendered, of entreaty for Himself, of intercession for His disciples, and earnest longing for the Father's glory, and for His own glory as the gift of His Father, a gift to be shared in by His disciples. Verily this was the prayer of God, for who but true God of true God, one substance

¹ St. Luke vi. 12.² St. John xvii. 4, 5.

with the Father, could dare to use such language, to make such assertions, or to frame such requests. In it we have absolute proof of the Divinity of our Lord, not declared, as on other occasions, to men, but breathed forth in the outpouring of His confidence with His Heavenly Father.

The Apostles could not have helped being forcibly impressed by the sight of their Master so constantly withdrawing into solitude to pray, it must have exercised a lasting influence upon their whole lives; and the heavenly grace inspiring such an action must have been appreciated by them, in proportion as their faith in His Divinity grew clearer and stronger. They were to be again witnesses of the like piety, of the same marvellous sight of God praying to God in the death-agony of Jesus, when, having ceased to speak to men, He turned and poured out His Soul to the Father. We have thus described what we may call the extrinsic beauty of the act of our Blessed Lord in prayer, as manifested by His predilection for retirement. His prompt withdrawal from the scenes where He had performed His wondrous works, His long vigils passed on the mountain-side, or amongst the sands of the desert, or by the wild sea-shore—these, together with the special and prolonged communications, recorded by the Evangelists as having been held by Him with His Heavenly Father before and after the performance of any action of extraordinary importance, these also have been mentioned in their place. On all such points our Divine Lord can be more or less imitated by us. Nay, rather, a true spirit of prayer will infallibly and spontaneously produce similar effects in our souls, and will manifest themselves in our predilections and formed habits. In vain would a man profess a love of prayer

if solitude was irksome to him, or if he withdrew with reluctance from places where duty now fulfilled had at first demanded his presence, because perhaps some kind of commendation or applause might have been reaped by delay. Egotism, ostentation, love of notice, and what may be termed a taste for publicity, especially when combined with much talking even on necessary matters, or with restlessness for information respecting trivial events—these are as antagonistic to a spirit of true interior prayer as is the glaring eye of the sun to the low-lying violet, which raises its modest head and wears its delicate bloom only beneath the sheltering underwood that half screens it from observation. Solitude with God engenders Divine habits. We learn to listen eagerly for His footsteps, to seek His face in prayer, and to still the very beatings of our own hearts that we may catch the sound of His lightest breathing. What wonder is it that those who thus live in the companionship of God should become silent without being morose; should perform their active works enjoined by duty without precipitation or excitement; should instinctively, when their work is finished, retire again to that solitude, surrounded by which they may unheeded, unwatched of men, commune heart to heart with their Heavenly Spouse, until gradually and unconsciously, through the vital energy inspired into them, they grow more and more into His likeness.

When, however, we would fain know something of the intrinsic beauty of the prayer of Jesus, we are compelled to stay in the outer courts, nor may we presume to intrude into "the holy of holies" within that adorable Soul. Nothing of what passes there can we know, save by the occasional manifestations which

He has Himself vouchsafed momentarily to open out to us in the prayers uttered aloud by Him to His Heavenly Father, or in the love for that Father which He revealed through His words and actions. The prayer, however, which our Lord thus breathed forth amply suffices not only to disclose to us the ineffable beauty of His Soul, but also to serve as a pattern for our own imitation, showing in what consists the true spirit of prayer. This may be said, not of that prayer alone which our Lord designedly and officially, as it were, taught His disciples, but of others also which He addressed to His Father "out of the abundance of His Heart," with no reference to present instruction, although the words He then uttered were destined to instruct afterwards generations of saints for all time to come. Such a prayer, containing far more than simple acts of petition, is the offering of praise already alluded to, as addressed by Jesus to His Father for having chosen the "little ones" to be the recipients of heavenly truths "hidden from the wise and prudent."¹ Of like character was the thanksgiving which, in a clear tone of voice, He offered up to His Father for that He had heard Him in the raising of Lazarus from the grave. But the prayer which of all others brings out most distinctly the Divine excellence of our Lord's human Soul, and bears the richest fruit of instruction for all who would be conformed to His Sacred Heart in the spirit of prayer, is that which He sighed forth beneath the moonlit olive-trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. Therein we see, first the "spirit of the fear of the Lord" in all its perfection; for He in Whose Soul nothing servile could find place, was yet deeply stirred with a filial shrinking from those judgments for sin

¹ St. Matt. xi. 25, 26.

which He had taken upon Himself, along with its awful penalty. This filial fear expressed itself in profound reverence, lowliest submission, and unreserved obedience; and all these together inspired that prayer of prayers, uttered on the night before the Passion: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." In the second place, a most tender piety characterized the prayer of our Lord, and this too in equal measure. His piety suggested the words "if it be possible"—that is, consistent with the glory of the Father, for that was infinitely dearer to Him than all else beside. Again when He entreats: "let this chalice pass from Me," He does so with absolute submission to His Father's will, because that will is His will also. We find in the fortitude marking our Lord's prayer, a third fruit of the Spirit's action. This point, however, we must reserve for later consideration.

Once more, we mark in our Lord's prayer that spirit of wisdom which discerns so clearly the all-holy will of God. This dwelt, with all its splendour, in the human Soul of Jesus, and made plain to Him the Divine will and its dread requirements, so that when He pronounced the awful *fiat*, He recognized as Man—for we are not speaking of His wisdom as the Word—the full extent of that to which He was committing Himself. The second time, when we hear, in this commencement of His Passion, the words of prayer falling from His sacred lips, He evidently acknowledges that the chalice could not pass from Him, since He no longer prays for this. His words are changed: "My Father," He exclaims, "if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done." And yet once more: "He went again and He prayed

the third time, saying the self-same word.”¹ This prayer of our Blessed Lord in the Garden deserves far longer consideration than we have space to give to it, for it contains every quality which should characterize true prayer, and it leads to that which should be the final object, as it is the perfection, of all prayer—namely, an unreserved, uncompromising conformity of heart and mind to the Divine will. We possess in this, and in the other acts of prayer of our Blessed Lord already referred to, the passing revelations which He has made of His communications with His Heavenly Father. Therein we recognize Him as to us “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” by Whom we ourselves come to the Father, that we may mount upward to Him on the wings of prayer, and find a rest and a home in that Father’s bosom.² It remains for us to notice that, in disclosing to us after what manner we are to pray, through study of the exceeding riches of His Soul while engaged in prayer, Jesus did at the same time, both by word and example, inculcate frequent retirement into solitude, in order that we may there converse all the more freely with God. He led His disciples up into solitary mountain passes, and along the sea-shore. He even crossed over to the opposite side of the Lake Genesareth with the view of escaping from the multitude, that they might converse with Himself in secret, and acquire that spirit of prayer which privacy helps to engender. Such was one part of His training of those who were to form the germ of the infant Church, and were to hand on the teaching and practice of their Master to all generations of the faithful. It was apart from others that He explained all these things to His disciples, saying to them, “that

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 42—44.

² St. John xiv. 6.

day when evening was come: Let us pass over to the other side."¹ Another striking occasion on which our Lord called His disciples away from the company of the rest, was when they came to give Him an exciting account of their success, and "related to Him all the things that they had done and taught."² Our Lord immediately replied: "Come apart into a desert place and rest a little. For there were many coming and going, so that they had not so much as time to eat"—a fact that sufficiently indicates the fame which the Apostles had already attained. Their Divine Master probably saw therein a danger for their as yet imperfect virtue; and in that very danger we have another proof of the detrimental effects of over-activity, inasmuch as solitude of heart and detachment of the mind from creatures are absolutely indispensable for acquiring and maintaining a spirit of prayer.

We know well there are many persons who pretend that detachment of the affections and interior recollection in God can be preserved in the midst of the most active employments. Such persons seek to confirm their theory by quoting many great saints whose lives were, more or less, passed in active works of charity to their neighbour. What they allege with regard to the particular saints whom they mention, is most true of them and of all such as resemble them, but it is most untrue when applied to the ordinary class of Christians and pious persons, whether engaged in the duties of the religious life, or living in the world. If amongst these last are to be found individuals who walk interiorly with God amid a number of exterior occupations, we may be assured that they have attained no ordinary degree of perfection in their spiritual life. It is plain

¹ St. Mark iv. 34, 35.

² St. Mark vi. 30.

that they cannot be guided simply by choice in their varied employments, that their preference must be for retirement and solitude, and that they will naturally fly back to these as to their centre, the moment that their work is accomplished. We may also conclude that their exterior labours are impregnated with the spirit they have imbibed in their secret communications with God. Such persons may safely pass their entire days in active services for the Church, and for their neighbour, without any detriment to their spiritual state, because their hearts are "where their treasure is," and they live in spirit amongst "those mysteries of the Kingdom," which Jesus divulges in secret to the especial friends and confidants of His Sacred Heart.¹ To this class belonged St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John of the Cross, St. Vincent of Paul, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Teresa, and many others who have toiled unceasingly for the good of the Church and of souls. But then their conversation was habitually in Heaven, and if necessity demanded of them continual intercourse during the day with their fellow-men, at night, like their Divine Master, Whose habits and predilections had taken possession of their souls, they went up to the mount, and there in solitude they held commune for hours with Him, without interruption and without restraint. Ordinary souls cannot venture to take these for their rule and guidance, unless they wish to give themselves up to intolerable pride and spiritual presumption. He, Whose authority is higher than that even of the greatest of His saints, has Himself drawn aside from the busy crowds those whom He would lead into the paths of spirituality and perfection. So

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 11.

evidently impressed were the disciples with the beauty of the example set them by their Divine Master in His prayer, that, after watching Him and reverently waiting until He had finished, one of their number besought Him, in the name of all, to teach them the same holy exercise. "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Their request our Lord immediately complied with, and repeated to them the exquisite formula known as our Lord's Prayer, proceeding afterwards to illustrate for them, in a series of parables, the influence of prayer with the loving Providence of their Heavenly Father.¹

We have, in the course of this chapter, been drawn into remarks that may appear somewhat alien to our purpose, which was exclusively to set forth the beauty of Jesus, instead of teaching others how to imitate Him. But the desire of imitating Him is a fruit to our souls, which we cannot help gathering from the practical study of the beauty which the Soul of our Lord manifested in His prayer and communings with His Heavenly Father. It was for our instruction, though not necessarily nor primarily, that He has made known to us, through His disciples, the nature and manner of His own prayer to God. Life for us, as for the Son of God, is a state of exile, in one sense indeed a night, because the beauty of God and the splendour of Heaven are in it veiled from our eyes. But the contemplation of "the mysteries of the Kingdom" will send forth flashes of light to illumine our darkness, and happy shall we be if, by an habitual sense of the Divine presence, and by the practice of interior recollection, we pass "the whole night" of our sojourn here below in prayer, until the sun arise and

¹ St. Luke xi. 1, seq.

“the day break and the shadows retire,”¹ when we shall come to “see the King in His beauty, in the land far off,”² in the Kingdom of His Father, and in the brightness of Eternal Day.

CHAPTER XXI.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS ACTIONS.

And the grace of God was in Him (St. Luke ii. 40).

THE truths of faith, by which we learn the surpassing riches of grace stored up in the Soul of our Divine Lord, will have contributed much to give us a thorough insight into the essential beauty which must have characterized His actions. Flowing from the very Fountain of Sanctity, and anointed with the Divine Unction, they could not fail to be clothed with heavenly grace, and to portray before men the character and the perfections of the invisible God. Faith would assure us of this, even if the written Gospel did not bear testimony to it. But those sacred pages are thickly studded with facts, as though with gems, recording the loveliness of Jesus manifested in the works He wrought, the words He uttered, and even in the simplest of His actions. It must be borne in mind that each one of the acts of Jesus proceeded from a Divine Person, and not from a mere man, though they were wrought through the organs of His Sacred Humanity. They drew their merit from distinct sources of holiness, which invested them not only with

¹ Cant. ii. 17.

² Isaias xxxiii. 17.

a dignity and a value, but also with a beauty, singularly and exclusively their own.

We cannot do better, if we would render this matter perfectly clear, than quote the following passage from Père Lallement. "The actions," he writes, "of Jesus Christ owed their origin to three different sources.

"The first of these we trace to the powers of His Soul, which were enriched with all the fulness of grace, and to the senses and members of His Body, which were adorned with all qualities befitting the majesty of the Man-God. Thus His actions were free from every kind of imperfection, whilst they were infinitely holy in themselves as proceeding from an infinite holiness, and consequently infinitely noble and infinitely precious.

"2. The second source of the actions of our Lord was the Person of the Word, rendering the actions of the Sacred Humanity Divine, in the same way as those of angels are angelical, and those of men human. Wherefore the actions of Jesus Christ are adorable because of the Divinity of their origin, and of the Person Whose acts they are, which imparts to them a nature, as it were, *deified*.

"It is, in the third place, the Holy Spirit Who governed the perfect order and economy of the actions of Jesus Christ in general, as well as each action in particular. It was in consequence of this heavenly guidance that, in His Sacred Humanity, our Lord wrought the same things that were wrought by the Divinity, the same effects of mercy, for example, of justice, sweetness, severity, love, and hatred. Hence it was as though the seal of the Divinity were affixed to His Human Nature, stamping on it the impress of the features of the original, so far as the Humanity could receive it. This was the work of the Holy Spirit,

desirous of tracing out for us, in the life and actions of Jesus Christ, a way along which to conduct us in safety to the glory and sovereign happiness of eternity."

Thus in every circumstance of His life, in all that He did or left undone, that He spoke or left unspoken, even to the slightest movements—for these could never in the smallest degree be called trivial or insignificant—He gave evidence of the all-holy and Divine principles by which He was governed, and of the presence of the Spirit by Whom He was led. Having now ascertained the theological basis of the intrinsic beauty of the actions of our Lord, let us gather as much as we possibly can from the sacred narrative in illustration of their extrinsic beauty, the latter flowing naturally from the former. God being the first Beauty, and the eminent source of all beauty, we may say that beauty is inherent in all His attributes, and that therefore it formed an integral element of all the virtues exercised or actions performed by the Eternal Son in His Sacred Humanity. It is the reverse of this with men, in whose actions even the most solid virtues are frequently made far from attractive through the many imperfections to be found in them. Still less grateful to others are innumerable actions, in themselves indeed highly commendable, but rendered absolutely deformed either by the absence of a pure intention, or by a painful ungraciousness of manner. Thus is it with ourselves, that truth, patience, obedience, almsgiving, and the like, by no means necessarily suggest that idea of beauty, which unerringly in Jesus clothed as with a garment each smallest thing He did, or spoke. There was in Him a golden radiance reflected from the interior beauty of His human Soul, and from the Divine Personality to which that Soul

was hypostatically united. "We saw His glory, the glory as it were of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."¹ We read in St. Luke's Gospel that "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert;" and after the space of forty days, He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," there to commence His Ministry.² What is said upon these occasions might be equally recorded of every action of our Lord's life, that in it He was "led by the Spirit," truly the highest of all guarantees as to the ineffable merit and beauty of all His actions. We know that Jesus went about everywhere doing good, performing works of mercy, comforting the sorrowful, instructing the ignorant, and converting sinners, and we know that it was Divine charity which prompted Him in all these acts. We know, moreover, that none of those imperfections which mar the beauty of similar works when performed by men, could by any possibility insinuate themselves into the actions of Jesus. But that which most especially occupies us in the present chapter is the external grace which accompanied all that our Lord performed, being the reflex of the loveliness and glory within.

An attentive student of the holy Gospels could not fail to be struck by the minuteness with which the smallest actions and movements of our Lord are detailed. Thus we read in the description of His preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, how He observed a species of ceremonial, for we are told: "He went into the synagogue according to His custom on the Sabbath-day; and He rose up to read. And the Book of Isaias the Prophet was delivered unto

¹ St. John i. 14.

² St. Luke iv. 1, 14.

Him, and as He unfolded the book, He found the place" where His own Mission was foretold. Having finished the short passage designed for His exordium, "when He had folded the book, He restored it to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him."¹ As we read the narrative, the whole scene appears to rise up vividly before us, and the grace and dignity of each movement of our Lord fixes our eye upon Him. We view the calm majesty with which He stood up to read, the quiet self-possession with which He unfolded the book, and then with heavenly wisdom selected the passage appropriate to His purpose. We mark the refolding of the book, the courteous restoration thereof to the minister, and finally the grave, gentle accents in which, having resumed His seat, He commenced His magisterial discourse on the passage He had just read. The whole event might have been related in much shorter space, without supplying details upon minor points which in no way substantially affected the completeness of the narrative. But St. Luke's artistic eye loved to linger in the spiritual atmosphere of so fair a scene, specially noting every point of beauty, every grace of gesture in the bearing of his Divine Master, and careful to paint them in words best adapted for the loving contemplation of generations to come.

Amongst the many symbolic actions of our Lord there is one which will occur with peculiar readiness to our minds, although it is not recorded by St. Luke, for it yields to none in force and grandeur of effect; we allude to His walking upon the waters. St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. John all narrate how our Lord bade His disciples take ship while He dismissed the people,

¹ St. Luke iv. 16, 17.

and afterwards retired to a mountain to pray. Meantime night came down upon them, and darkness surrounded the little bark of Peter, as it struggled with the rising waves in the middle of the sea. Then, about the fourth watch, Jesus saw that His Apostles were "labouring in rowing, for the wind was contrary." And "He cometh to them walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them." No wonder the terrified fishermen imagined they saw an apparition, as they gazed upon so unwonted and unexpected a sight. Far off they had descried a distant figure enveloped with a luminous halo, approaching towards them from a background of black and angry clouds, through the howling blasts, and over the agitated waves; and it seemed to them as though the spirit of the storm were threatening them with destruction. Then, as this figure of majesty drew near, they were awed by the commanding dignity and beauty of its appearance, so full of mysterious rest and peace amid such a scene, calm in the strength of its conscious security. How startling a difference in its manner of teaching the same great lesson of entire confidence in the presence and protection of Jesus characterized this manifestation of His providential care from that of His silent sleep, while that same boat of Peter was encountering a like storm on the very same lake. And when "the disciples cried out for fear, Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart, it is I, fear not."¹ We might almost say, that not only does this event stand alone in its own peculiar character and design, but that it is unrivalled for force and beauty of dramatic expression, and must have stamped itself upon the memory of the disciples for life, as a vision alongside

¹ St. Matt. xiv. 22—23.

of that of the Transfiguration, ever afresh presenting their Divine Master before them, as one Who surpassed all the sons of men in the grandeur and beauty of His external acts.

Over and over again, in the Gospels, we have evidence of that same keen appreciation, on the part of the Evangelists, of the grace and beauty which ennobled every movement and action of Jesus. Our attention is repeatedly called to such effective points as these. "And there went great multitudes with Him, and turning, He said to them," &c.¹ It is, as we might expect, the artistic taste of the Evangelist which caught, in the simple movement of our Lord when turning to address the people who followed Him, a particular significance and beauty meriting especial mention. We ourselves are reminded of the impression that these simple and apparently trivial actions of our Lord must have produced upon "eye-witnesses" before they could have so retained them in their minds, and have recurred to them with so great an unction of love and devotion as to enable an inspired writer to seize upon them, enshrine them in his own mind and heart, and feel at once that they were worthy of record in the sacred history. It is again St. Luke who presents to us a vivid picture of the majesty of action and appearance with which our Lord looked round upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and all who were assembled in the synagogue, one Sabbath-day when He was about to heal the man who had a withered hand. With dignified authority He bade the man stand forth in their midst, and having addressed to the scribes and others present His question as to the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath-day, it would

¹ St. Luke xiv. 25.

appear that He calmly surveyed the assembly and, by His magisterial bearing asserted, with a weight of manner unknown to men, the right, inherent in His Divine Personality, to dispense with the law of the Sabbath in order that He might heal the sick. "And looking round about on them all, He said to the man: Stretch forth thy hand, and he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored."¹ Again, when the woman with an issue of blood touched His garment secretly amid the crowd, that she might be cured of her malady, Jesus "looked about to see her who had done this," spoke of the virtue that had passed from Him, and in a tone of innate grace and solemnity said to her before all: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease."² Elsewhere we read that "going up into a mountain, He sat there," whither great multitudes resorted to Him, bringing the blind, the lame, and many others to be cured.³ Of what real importance is it to the history that our Lord sat, rather than stood, on this, or on any other occasions where a similar action is especially noted? Yet such touches of scene-painting as these could not well be spared, for their absence would deprive us of glimpses of great beauty, and to miss them were an incalculable loss. Simple expressions of this nature have sufficed to fix the contemplative eye of the saints, and to ravish their souls with new vistas opened out to them disclosing the force and impressiveness of the external manner of the Incarnate God. It is only persons of low and sluggish spiritual attainment, who perceive nothing in such strokes and touches of the pencil as we have referred to, wherewith to point or nourish devotion, and awaken a keener appreciation of the

¹ St. Luke vi. 10.² St. Mark v. 34.³ St. Matt. xv. 30.

exceeding beauty of our Lord. If a profane quotation may be permitted in connection with so sacred a subject, we would say they fall under the censure of the poet's lines—

A primrose on the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him
And nothing more.

Happier are they whose spiritual discernment can find in descriptions, inspired by the Holy Ghost Himself, of actions and movements which the sacred Evangelists did not regard as too insignificant for mention, abundant fuel for quickening and strengthening the flame of Divine love within their hearts.

When we come to the contemplation of the manner in which our Lord performed His works of mercy we find still more cause for loving admiration, and much also for our own instruction. Although this carries us beyond the direct design we have before us, we cannot refrain from one or two observations, which may at least serve as a dark background against which the purity and beauty of the action of our Lord will stand forth all the more prominently and brilliantly. Imperfection and deformity act as a foil to perfection and symmetry—the contrast casting a deeper shadow over the abyss between the two. We have in a previous chapter shown how familiar intercourse with our Lord creates similarity of predilections, habits, and even manners, in proportion to the measure of our low estate. For this reason those who are habitually united to Him will involuntarily form habits of gentleness, of moderation in their language, of silence, of retirement, and other virtues. The tones of their voice, and the manner of their actions will have about them no character of incivility or roughness, but everything

in them will savour of the Spirit of Love Who abides within them, and Whose promptings they ever obey. What refinement of culture is to the educated man, the influence of the intimate friendship of Jesus Christ is to the spiritual man; with this sole difference that, whereas in the former refinement is generally quite as superficial as a highly polished veneering, in the latter the delicacy of culture emanates from within, like the bloom on the peach, or the ruddy glow of health upon the cheek of youth. Before considering the grace which accompanied every deed of mercy as it proceeded from our Lord, it will be serviceable if we recall for a moment how frequently with us the manner of performing them strips our actions of all attractiveness, and we might almost say of all intrinsic value. Assistance rendered grudgingly, or ostentatiously, or ungraced by the charm of loving kindness, is like fruit without its bloom, and frequently proves a source of temptation rather than a cause of gratitude.

We remember seeing, on one occasion, a poor old man who in the depth of winter was respectfully, by sign rather than by words, soliciting alms from some gentlemen who were walking along the pavement in an English garrison town. As heavy rain had been falling for a long time, the road was deep in thick mud. Into this one of the gentlemen threw some coin which he had taken from his pocket, and left the poor aged beggar to extricate it as best he could. As he sought for the money, the man frequently turned his eye upon his vulgar and contemptuous benefactor, with an expression of amazement that a gentleman who aped to be so fine could demean himself by such a grossly uncourteous act. In how many cases does not the manner in which alms are bestowed engender anger

and disgust in the hearts of the recipients, rather than any more genial sentiment. Similarly, attendance on the sick or suffering is valued only in proportion to the true consideration and sympathy with which it is offered and carried out. Less experienced nursing will be far more prized by the sufferer, so long as it is accompanied by genuine and patient care, than the most skilled talent and experience, if ungraced by these qualities.

Let us now turn to our Divine Lord, and watch Him as He performs some work of mercy, and we shall see that here, as elsewhere, the Evangelists carefully record not only the action in itself, but the grace and sweetness of feeling which accompanied it. Let us take for an instance of this the cure of the leper, in which our Lord did not content Himself with simply healing the afflicted man, but, in order to exhibit more care and interest, "stretched forth His hand and touched him"—a fact duly noted by each of the inspired narrators. We know that leprosy was held in particular horror by the Jews, and that those who were afflicted by this terrible malady were wholly separated from their fellow-men. This incident then of our Lord's having touched one of these unfortunate outcasts, possesses a charm heightened by our full knowledge that this act of touch was in no way necessary to a cure, which depended alone upon His will to effect it. We find that our Lord in most cases laid His hands upon the sick and those who were possessed. In the cure of the lunatic boy we are told: "Jesus taking him by the hand lifted him up."¹ In the cure of Peter's mother-in-law, "He touched her hand, and the fever left her."² In raising to life the daughter of Jairus,

¹ St. Mark ix. 26.

² St. Matt. viii. 15.

“He went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose.”¹ In the cure of the blind men, “He touched their eyes.” Towards the blind man of Bethsaida, our Lord’s Divine sweetness is still more strikingly displayed, because before working the cure, in which He again laid His hands upon the man’s eyes, it is said that “taking the blind man by the hand He led him out of the town.”² In all these actions, so full, not only of intrinsic beauty, but also of extrinsic grace and loveliness, our Lord was “led by the Spirit.” It was the perfect illustration of that gift of piety, which caused Him to behold in all men the children of His Heavenly Father; and in the most afflicted among them the strongest claimants to His tender care and consolation. It was the same beautiful gift which caused Him authoritatively, and with majestic dignity, to assert His claims to their faith in His Divinity, when the honour of His Father demanded it. Yet, at the same time, it rendered Him “slow to anger” with the tempted, and more tender than the tenderest mother with the afflicted and the sorrowing. The gentleness and loving kindness which characterized the actions of our Lord were, as we have seen, accessories imparting to deeds, already beautiful in themselves, an additional grace, like flowers or drapery on a graceful figure, or the golden radiance reflected from the sun upon a bright and lovely landscape. Thus He would let the sufferers feel the gentle and reassuring contact of His hand. He would prove in this way that their maladies gave Him no shadow of repugnance, that He sympathized with them, and in addition to the mere act of healing their corporal miseries, wished also to console and comfort them. How true is it that we could not

¹ St. Matt. ix. 25.² St. Matt. viii. 23.

spare one word from the sacred history which helps us to realize all this.

When we recall besides that the cure of the body wrought by Jesus was a figure of the healing of our spiritual maladies which He would effect by His grace, His acts become still more significative. It is by the touch of His grace that He awakens the souls who were dead in sin. It is by gently leading us "out of the town," that is, away from worldly solitudes, and a crowd of distractions, as He did with the blind man of Bethsaida, that He gradually enlightens us, so that at length we come to see all things clearly. "And taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town." We can picture to ourselves the astonishment, as well as the admiration of many on witnessing the voluntary and graceful offices of attention rendered by our Lord. Now, that which formed matter for astonishment and admiration in those who witnessed it with their corporal eyes, is well fitted to rivet the eye of our contemplation and impel us to yield up our whole hearts to the guidance of one so gentle and so tender in His action with us. When we feel the pressure of His blessed hand upon us as He leads us out of the way of temptation, our hearts must needs "burn within us," as did the hearts of the disciples when He walked with them on the road to Emmaus. When also, having led us into solitude, He has again divinely touched our eyes, we shall see Him "in His beauty," and despise all else for the sake of His love. As it was with the sick and afflicted, so also was it with sinners in general. Those who would have shrunk back from the Scribes and Pharisees, drew near to Jesus in all the confidence of an interior conviction that they would meet with no contempt or coldness, but on the contrary only with

kindness and gentleness. "Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him."¹ They followed Him even into the houses whither He had gone to eat meat, so secure did they feel that they should not be cast out. They pressed upon Him by the sea-shore and along the roadside, having no fear of His shrinking from contact with them. Instances of the unchanging benevolence and kindness of our Blessed Lord to all might have been indefinitely multiplied, for St. John tells us that, "if every one of the things which Jesus did had been written, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written."² Whether our Lord was restoring consolation and health to the sorrowful and diseased, or, with the dignity of a Divine Teacher, was engaged in preaching "the mysteries of the Kingdom," to the reproof of the cynical and hard-hearted; whether the nature of His work called forth in Him feelings of tenderness or indignation, He was always equally guided by the counsel of Divine Wisdom, always equally led by the Spirit, always manifesting, in its highest perfection, the gift of piety towards God and towards men. It was a Divine Person Whose beauty was reflected in the Humanity with which He had clothed Himself, and which shed its radiance over every act and movement, however trivial in itself.

It must be remembered likewise that the same Personality which imparted such lustre to the actions of our Lord, gave to His whole bearing, even to His least gesture, a dignity and a grace such as man had never before looked upon. This it is which contemplative souls grasp when they read in the Gospels the several points already referred to as having such deep

¹ St. Luke xv. 1.

² St. John xxi. 23.

meaning for those who recorded them, and indeed for all souls to whom the loveliness of the Incarnate God is an ever-present thought. The very turning of His sacred head, the stretching forth of His hands, His sitting down in the presence of the people, His walking along the roadside, His leaving the Temple when His Ministry was finally ended, His manner of entering St. Peter's bark and preaching from it to the multitudes assembled on the shore, His sitting down at meat with the publicans and sinners, His glancing up to the tree from the branches of which Zacheus watched Him passing—these and innumerable other slight acts which we find recorded in the sacred writings, contain an inexhaustible suggestiveness to us of holy familiarity with Jesus and ease in His presence, greatly quickening the fire of our love and the fervour of our prayer. The very last action of our Lord upon earth which men were to witness was one of singular grace and beauty, combined with solemnity and dignity. He led the Apostles and other of the disciples out to Bethania, that spot so consecrated and so endeared to them by His frequent presence, "and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into Heaven."¹ Thus did He pass upward from their midst in the act of benediction, stretching over them those hands which had, for three-and-thirty years, shed richest blessings upon the earth, and closing by an action full of graciousness that life which had, even throughout the days of humiliation, mirrored forth to all men the loveliness of God.

If, instead of straining our imaginations in the attempt to realize how certain actions should be done

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

by us, we were to regard them in our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom all human actions were sanctified and deified by the double anointing of the Godhead and of the plenitude of grace in His human Soul, we should far more readily attain a spirit of prayer, and through that a closer resemblance to our Divine Model. We should also, by studying the beauty of His external acts, be led on to love and adore the invisible thoughts and intentions of our Lord's Sacred Heart, discovering that these, although hidden from the knowledge of men, are the soul and life of the grace and beauty of His exterior works and of the perfection of the manner in which they were performed. So penetrated with tenderness and gentleness was the whole exterior of Jesus that we may infallibly assure ourselves how He would have acted, and how He did act, in relation to every creature whom His Heavenly Father had made. Each one belonging even to the lowest order of being—the irrational animals—each obtained His reverence and love because it was the work of His Father's hand. In their proportion were they the objects of His care and, if need be, of His protection from the cruelty of men, who often forget that they are not supreme lords and masters over the poor dumb beasts, which the liberality of their Creator has placed temporarily under their charge, for their service, guardianship, and responsible use.

Wherever men fail to recognize this claim of the lower creatures upon their respect and considerateness in the employment of them, and to a certain extent upon their benevolent protection; wherever there is a tendency to callousness of heart in their regard, we may be sure there is a corresponding defect, on still more serious points, of true resemblance to Him Whose

pious reverence was extended to every creature of God. Wherefore let us not consider as unworthy of attention the expressions we find in the Gospel narrative indicating the grace of our Lord's manner of action. Such expressions carry many fruitful lessons to souls enamoured with our Lord's loveliness, and in our meditations on the mysteries of the Incarnation and on the narrated facts of our Lord's life upon earth, it is the lack of spiritual discernment and of a true interior spirit of prayer which alone can account for our insensibility to the significance of the several points of detail indicated by the inspired writers.

CHAPTER XXII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS REPROACHES, COMPLAINTS, AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

*O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee ?
Answer thou Me (Micneas vi. 3).*

FEW as are the precise expressions of complaint which the Evangelists record to have come from the lips of our Blessed Lord, those mentioned are most eloquent revelations of the motives of His Sacred Heart—Its love, Its sensitiveness, and Its sorrows. In the pages of the Old Testament, the pathetic strains of Divine complaint or reproach are continually heard, and nothing can be grander, and at the same time more tenderly plaintive in character, than they are.

But this voice, speaking out a frustrated love, is not simply the voice by which God appeals to His people and entreats them to repent and be converted to Him, Who made them; it is, moreover, the voice of prophecy,

announcing the wrongs, the sorrows, and the dereliction of the God-Saviour Who was to come, and Who, in human flesh, was to taste, and drink to the dregs, the bitter chalice of disappointment. And yet how could He, it may be asked, Who knew all things—not only as the Word, but as Man, by reason of the perfection of His knowledge—how could such a one experience disappointment? He must have known all the contradictions and ingratitude which He would have to encounter, all the apparent failure about to attend His Mission in regard of innumerable souls, together with the comparatively small harvest to be reaped as the reward of His labours, when He should close His eyes upon the Cross. Yes, all this and more had lain before His mental vision from the very beginning, but still that actual contact with it, which was the experience He condescended to acquire, would bring it home to His Sacred Heart, and cause Him to give utterance to those touching complaints that reveal the keen anguish of His Soul. Here, as elsewhere, it is not enough simply to read the sacred narrative. We must dwell on it in the spirit of prayer and of love, and we must attain an inward perception of the beauty of Jesus, guiding the heart, which is really captivated and animated by that beauty. If we are deficient in these, we shall fail to learn anything from the plaintive voice of reproach, the note of gentle remonstrance, when they undoubtedly speak to our hearts; for we must not expect to find in the words of Jesus the impassioned strains we meet with in the language of the Prophets, who prefigured Him and foretold His wrongs. The reproaches of our Lord are elicited by the actual circumstances in which He found Himself placed, and generally bear special reference to them. Sometimes

they are implied rather than formally expressed, and for this, as well as other reasons, if we would fully discern their meaning, we must bring to the study of the Gospel narratives a mind and heart already prepared to appreciate the Divine loveliness of Jesus.

The first note of complaint that strikes upon our ear is that to which our Lord gave utterance when, on His coming into His own city of Nazareth, the people "were scandalized in regard of Him." They beheld in Him but the carpenter whom they had known from His youth, and with whose family they were well acquainted. Wherefore "Jesus saith to them: A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred."¹ His words bore reference to His rejection by His own nation, as well as to the disowning of Him by the particular city of Nazareth, recorded by St. John with such delicate feeling. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."² This rejection of Him in His own city must have brought home keenly to our Lord's Heart by anticipation the dereliction which awaited Him at the conclusion of His Public Ministry, on the part of so many to whom His humility and lowliness were to be a scandal and a stumbling-block. It must have forewarned Him most painfully that it was by His own nation He was to be delivered up to death, in fulfilment of Pilate's cruel taunt: "Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me. What hast Thou done?"³ Those of His own country had listened with admiration to His doctrine, and yet, after all, we are told "He could not do any miracles there, only that He cured a few that were sick. And He wondered

¹ St. Mark vi. 3, 4.

² St. John i. 11.

³ St. John xviii. 35.

because of their unbelief.”¹ So also on the occasion of another visit to Nazareth, although the people began by wondering “at the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth,” yet, when He addressed to them a similitude which they understood to bear a slighting reference to themselves, they were “filled with anger, and rose up and thrust Him out of their city,” ending even by an attempt to destroy Him.² Thus did disappointment constantly follow on the footsteps of Him Who was nevertheless Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth, and before Whose Name “every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth.”³

The voice of complaint again makes itself heard in the history of the cure of the ten lepers. These were so sensible of their extreme misery that they stood afar off and lifted up their voice in supplication. They called our Lord “Master,” and craved but His mercy. Who would not have thought their dispositions such as to guarantee their gratitude, when their prayer should be granted? Yet how sad are the tones of disappointment which we hear from the lips of Jesus after the cure had been so generously accorded by Him? “Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger.”⁴ Cruel ingratitude indeed! This, however, was but a figure of those acts of hateful unthankfulness, those omissions through forgetfulness and neglect which, until the end of time, were to form the only return made by too many of us for countless benefits bestowed with the lavish hand of God, that knows not where to stay itself. Such is one instance only out of

¹ St. Mark vi. 5, 6.

² St. Luke iv. 22, 29, 30.

³ Philipp. ii. 9.

⁴ St. Luke xvii. 17, 18.

innumerable others of a similar character, enabling us to form some idea of the disappointments to which our Lord was subjected, and of the want of correspondence which the grace of God is doomed to meet with amongst men.

When our Lord had occasion to rebuke the Jewish rulers, His complaints become more definite and wear a more pained expression, because of the hardness of their hearts. Thus we find Him lamenting that they would not approach Him. "You will not come to Me, that you may have life."¹ We can clearly discern in these words the bitter anguish of the Saviour, Whose dearest wish had been "to give them life, and to give it more abundantly."² He had extended His arms and opened His Heart to them, saying: "Come unto Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."³ No more grievous failure of His hope could have befallen the Heart of our Blessed Lord than the refusal of correspondence to His affectionate invitations. In the case of those to whom His reproach was specially addressed, it inflicted an aggravated grief, inasmuch as their alienation from Him was not only an act of neglect, but the empoisoned fruit of malice and hatred. So cruel is the wound it gives to His sensitive Heart that He continues His complaint. "I am come in the Name of My Father, and you receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive," wherein we discern the particular source of His exceeding great grief. It is that the rejection of His Father is involved in His own. It is His Father's glory which is attacked, through their disbelief in the Saviour Whom He had sent to deliver them. It was to the same hard-hearted nation, in whose

¹ St. John v. 40.² St. John x. 10.³ St. Matt. xi. 28.

hearing He had in formal terms so lately avowed His unity with the Father, and who took up stones to stone Him, in consequence of that avowal, that our Lord addressed His argument of sad complaints. In answer to their threatened violence Jesus asked them: "Many good works I have showed you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?"¹ Many good works! Had not His whole life been one uninterrupted succession of benefits, conferred upon His ungrateful people? There was, doubtless, in the question which our Lord put to them, a touch of that gentle irony with which He knew well how to add pungency, now and again, to His words, and which had the effect of heightening their force and significance. Truly, if the hearts of those who heard Him had not been steeled against all impression, they must have been touched with remorse on hearing so moving an appeal. We have known souls but little given to piety, or devotion to our Lord's words, who yet have been melted to tears when this same reproach was recalled to their minds, and applied to their own infidelity in abusing many graces received. The reproaches and complaints of Jesus have a sweetness and a gift of penetrating the heart which no words of men can ever possess, and if we admit them into our souls, and allow them to sink deeply therein, they cannot fail to form within us a perennial spring of compunction, purifying our souls and filling them with an all-enduring love. Our ears detect a similar tone of reproach in the answer which our Lord gave to the servant of the High Priest, who struck Him on the cheek as He stood before the Council. "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?"² How

¹ St. John x. 32.² St. John xviii. 23.

loudly do not these words ring in our ears, awakening memories that re-echo in the depth of our souls the plaintive question, "Why?" uttered by the Son of God, Whose hand had never been extended but in benediction, and Whose Heart was never wearied of conferring benefits.

But it was not only among the hostile and malicious that our Lord was doomed to meet with disappointment. Even by the hand of "His own" the bitter chalice was prepared for Him, in various ways and differently apportioned measure. Ages before had been predicted the anguish of this inward Passion which He would have to endure from those who loved Him.¹ The pathetic language of prophecy, even if we had no other testimony, bears witness to the pangs of disappointment which were to afflict His most feeling Heart. His own disciples were they who murmured at His doctrine concerning the "Living Bread," and said among themselves: "This saying is hard, and who can bear it? After which many of them went back and walked no more with Him."² And although, as the Evangelist remarks, "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray Him," yet He condescended to feel all the bitterness of disappointment when this abandonment of Him by those whom He had chosen to be His own friends and the confidants of His secrets did actually occur, as if it had been hidden from Him until then. There was the like strain of disappointment in the reply our Lord made to St. Peter, when asked by him to explain the parable of the blind leading the blind. "Are you also yet without understanding?" asked our Lord.³ As though He would

¹ Zach. xiii. 6.

² St. John vi. 61, 67.

³ St. Matt. xv. 16.

say: After so many instructions, after so long a time that you have been with Me, are you still without understanding, like persons who are strangers to Me? It was the voice of a complaint which has often found response in hearts wearied out by the apparent unfruitfulness of long labours, and yet perhaps strengthened still to persevere, through remembrance that Jesus also experienced disappointment, even when surrounded by His Apostles. Remonstrances of the same character fell from the lips of our Lord during the discourse after the Last Supper, in reply to Philip's impassioned demand that He would show him the Father. "Jesus saith to him, So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me?"¹ That any of those there assembled on the very eve of His parting from them should yet fail to recognize His Divinity, should still disbelieve "that He was in the Father and the Father in Him," and that consequently "he who saw Him saw the Father also"—this was a discouragement which might well provoke the gentle reproach: "So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me?" These words, however, so expressive of painful surprise, both in themselves and in their primary signification, are capable of another interpretation which may come closely home to all of us.

For nearly nineteen centuries has our Blessed Lord been with men, long enough surely for us to have learnt, in a thousand different ways, that His love is illimitable, long enough for us to read His character and place our utmost trust in Him, to confide now in His tenderness and compassion, to hope all things from Him, because of His yearning for our salvation. And yet how few there are who treat Him as their

¹ St. John xiv. 9.

one Friend above all friends, who know His Sacred Heart and rely upon It, or who recognize that He is "beautiful above the sons of men."¹ Wherefore to us also, no less than to St. Philip, is His plaintive reproach applicable. A similar tone is heard even during the days of our Lord's Risen Life, when mildly rebuking Thomas for his disbelief in his Master's Resurrection: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."² These words must have sunk deeply and remained long unexpunged from the Apostle's heart, and, like the sound of the cock-crow to St. Peter, must have produced therein an abiding sorrow. It was a sterner reproof than this which Jesus addressed to the Pharisee, in whose house He was at meat, when Magdalen entered, and cast herself at His feet, that she might render to them the worship of her penitential love. Our Lord's remonstrance on that occasion may rank among the most detailed and pointed which His sacred lips ever delivered. The sustained chain of His remarks acts as a wholly unexpected manifestation of His close observation, and His keen and delicate appreciation of the Pharisee's coldness and neglect in not bestowing upon his Guest the usual marks of hospitality. But, more than this, it proves how deeply wounded our Lord's Heart is by all similar acts of unfeeling indifference. "Simon, I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet, . . . thou gavest Me no kiss, . . . My head with oil thou didst not anoint."³ We are not told what effect so severe, so suggestive, and yet, at the same time, so persuasive an expostulation as this produced in the mind of the Pharisee. But we know of

¹ Psalm xliv. 3.² St. John xx. 29.³ St. Luke vii. 44-46.

none, even on the part of our Lord, better calculated to have opened out his heart to sentiments of shame, regret, humiliation, and yet of love and admiration towards his Divine Guest.

When we come to speak of our Lord's instructions as contained in His parables, we find the strain of plaintive reproach repeating itself over and over again. It strikes upon our ear in the similitude of the children seated by the market-place, "who, crying to their companions, say: we have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have lamented, and you have not mourned." Kindred to their spirit was the generation who declared of the Precursor of our Lord that "he had a devil," and of the Son of Man Himself, that He was "a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners."¹ The same note resounds from the Parable of the Husbandmen, who, when the fruit of the vineyard was demanded of them, beat and wounded the messengers that came, sending them away empty, and finally killed the heir himself, the "beloved son of the lord of the vineyard whom he had sent, thinking they at least would reverence him."² Again, the Parable of the Cockle touches the like chord, for its appearance in the field where only good seed had been sown gave rise to the complaint of "the good man of the house," in his reply to his servants: "An enemy hath done this."³ The realization of this figure will, alas! be carried on, until the end of time, by the arch-enemy of the Church and of souls, in which, despite the "good seed" sown by our Lord, he is ever over-sowing the cockle of evil, not only for their own detriment, but that by their means he may spread scandals in the

¹ St. Matt. xi. 16—19.

² St. Luke xx. 9—15.

³ St. Matt. xiii. 28.

Church, and thus cast aspersions upon the truth of Jesus Christ. The voice of lament makes itself heard too in the Parable of the Ten Pounds, wherein our Lord graphically describes His own cruel rejection by the Jews. "His citizens hated him," we are told, and they said: "We will not have this man to reign over us." They called him "an austere man," reaping that which he had not sown, an accusation which must have been made against our Lord Himself, at least by implication, otherwise it would not have been thus introduced by Him into the parable. If we judge aright, this fact must have been in an especial manner wounding to His generous and tender Heart; as, doubtless, was the declaration which the Jews only too fully carried out, "We will not have this Man to reign over us."¹

The mingled affection and sadness of our Lord's address to His beloved city Jerusalem carries along with it also a sharp accentuation of reproach, that the city had rejected its Saviour. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not."² Thus the tenderness, the sensitiveness, and the wounded love of the Heart of Jesus find expression in the voice of complaint, more musical than the harp of David, more plaintive than the pathetic strains of Jeremias, more melodious than the sweetest of earth's music, or the songs of the angelic hosts.

Once more, when hanging upon the Cross, our Lord seems to concentrate all the complaints He had ever uttered, in that one thrilling cry: "I thirst." It was the last utterance of His disappointed, frustrated love.

¹ St. Luke xix. 14—21.

² St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

He had finished His part, He could do no more. The hour for closing His Mission had arrived, and still how small was the harvest of souls in comparison with His toils, or as reward for His service of three-and-thirty years—and such years! Poor generous Heart! baffled in Its generosity, wounded in Its love, disappointed in Its expectations of souls for whom It had lived and suffered, and was breaking. No wonder It put forth that supreme cry of complaint, that most tender of reproaches: “I thirst”—a cry which should echo throughout all time in testimony of Its changeless love. And the Beloved Disciple, who had lain upon the breast of Jesus, and was made the confidant of His secrets and His sorrows, takes up the strain in mournful complaint, foreboding, even in the commencement of his Gospel, how “Jesus came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” And the sadness of this thought seems to rest upon and overshadow its every chapter and verse, imparting a peculiarly ominous character to the whole Gospel.

On the last occasion that the voice of supreme distress is heard from the lips of Jesus before they are closed in death, it bears no longer the accents of reproach or disappointment, but of adoring, yet anguished love, though still expressing itself in the language of complaint. Turning away from men, He makes His appeal to His Heavenly Father, Who nevertheless seems to have abandoned Him: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” We know that His Father did not really forsake Him, but our Lord restrained by a miracle His Divinity from mitigating, even with one drop of consolation, the bitterness of the chalice He had to drain to the very dregs. He was therefore a prey to the same misery of feeling in His most sensitive

nature, as though He were verily and indeed abandoned by the Godhead, and His Humanity left to suffer all its torments of Soul and Body in utter isolation. His complaint was, as has been said, in this instance an offering of the highest adoration, and therefore does not partake at all in the nature of any of His previous utterances. It was addressed, not to men, but to God. It was expressive, not of any wrong, but of pure anguish such as the Divine dereliction alone could cause. Thus we place it at the conclusion of the present chapter, not as in any way the final link of a chain of previous examples, but simply as illustrative of the loveliness of complaint in the mouth of Jesus, whether addressed to His Father or to men.

In addition to the instances we have specified, there are many others mentioned in the Gospels wherein our Lord must have suffered bitter disappointment, as when many offered themselves to follow Him, and then, on hearing the conditions requisite for becoming permanently His disciples, coldly withdrew, preferring to adhere to their riches and pleasures. This disappointment is forcibly represented in the Parable of the Marriage-supper, which narrates how the invitation, so liberally sent out, is disregarded for trifles of the most earthly character—a figure well calculated to indicate the disregard in which the graces freely bestowed by God on men, as well as special graces directly offered them, are held by perhaps the greater number of persons.¹ Our Lord has a most just claim upon our sympathy in the disappointments which He vouchsafed to experience because of His Humanity, inasmuch as we ourselves have borne our own special share in inflicting them. Few, indeed, are those who have not

¹ St. Luke xiv. 16—24.

fallen short of what they might have been, had they faithfully corresponded to grace; who have not neglected again and again the loving invitations of Jesus to follow Him more closely; who have not slumbered when He asked them to watch with Him. To how many Christians might He not fairly address the same words that He did to Simon: "Thou gavest Me no kiss" when I entered your heart in Holy Communion, or by some special visitation of grace.

In too many cases our Lord might repeat to us His reproach of former times: "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"¹ He might apply to us the far milder expostulation, urged by Him against His Apostles in the Cenacle: "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name." For by these words He seems to express a want of full confidence either in His love, or in the power of His intercession with the Father; two possibilities which must have struck an equally keen pang of suffering into His Sacred Heart. May the touching beauty then of our Lord's complaints ring continually in our ears, and make plaintive music in our hearts, awakening chords there which perhaps have long remained mute; and once awakened, may they never cease their strains on earth.

¹ St. Luke vi. 46.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS COUNTENANCE.

Thou art beautiful above the sons of men (Psalm xliv. 3).

OUR Lord Jesus Christ being not only perfect Man, but also Incarnate God, the Image of the Father's beauty, it was but meet that He should be beautiful, not merely in His Soul, but in His Body likewise. Nay, we could scarcely well conceive that one Whose Personality was Divine should be other than beautiful, regarding His human beauty as the veil through which His uncreated loveliness was discernible, only with its splendour subdued, the flashes of its glory held in check, so that men could look on it and yet live. Every feature in that countenance claims our worship, as does every smile and gesture, inasmuch as they are the revelation of the good pleasure or the anger of a Divine Person, and the manifestation of the Divine character. As the Hypostatic Union is the first principle of all the graces of our Lord, so is it the first and all-sufficient reason for our worship of each separate part of His Sacred Body, as well as of its every movement and action.

It was the eternal love which looked forth from the sacred eyes, those windows of the soul; and when during His Infancy, or in after-life, in order to awaken in others sympathy with Himself they assumed a look of astonishment, they only rendered more striking the

light of that eternal wisdom which shone forth through them. That perfectly formed brow so exquisite in its outlines, whose tranquil surface no lines of care or anxiety could ever furrow, shadowed forth the majestic thoughtfulness of God; and was a fitting shrine for His ever active, yet ever peaceful and self-possessed intelligence. That mouth so delicately formed, the ever open and ever ready gate of the thoughts; those lips whose curves expressed so faithfully the calm rest of the Soul within, these served as the organ by which was made known to men the everlasting truth. One day it will pronounce their final doom, and in Heaven itself will speak to us those many mysteries we could not bear to hear on earth, but which then will delight our souls with a joy that eternity can never exhaust. Those ears too, like faithful sentinels, ever guarded the citadel within, and kept their sleepless watch lest any tale of distress or suffering should appeal in vain to them for hearing.

It is said that smiles are an involuntary revelation of character. If so, what depths of hidden beauty must not the smile of Jesus have disclosed. If in men, their smiles frequently betray harshness of temper, an unamiable bias of mind, avarice, weakness, sensuality, and innumerable other unlovely tendencies, how clothed with every radiant loveliness must have been that smile which mirrored forth on a human countenance the perfections of God, which revealed the interior beauty of one in Whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally."¹ If but a look of Jesus has sufficed to convert St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, and the penitent thief, and to attach innumerable souls to His side for ever, what must have been the power of

¹ Coloss. ii. 9.

His smile, that smile which shall welcome us, when in His infinite mercy He pronounces the final sentence declaring us to be saved, and admitting us into possession of His Kingdom for ever; that smile which shall light up the interior of our redeemed souls, at the last great day when Jesus cometh in His triumph to delight our ears with those words, for the hearing of which we have so long and patiently yearned, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."¹ His smile will then be our welcome home, the passport to our eternal country, to our heavenly mansion; and it is in the effulgence of that smile we are destined to live for ever. It is the light of Heaven, the smile of the Saviour Who by the glory of His human beauty has conquered the souls gathered around Him, lifting them up to ecstatic adoration. He has borne them away as spoils of the earth to the Kingdom of His Father. That smile is, at the same time, the smile of one Who is God; and therefore the full sum of all which it expresses can never be either fathomed by reason of its depth, or reached in its height by the most perfect of saints or angels. Surely that smile was, in its lowly gentleness, bestowed upon the little ones whom Jesus drew to His bosom that He might embrace them, and for whom especially He said the Kingdom of Heaven was prepared.

The expressions adopted by the Evangelists, when referring to our Lord's gestures or glances, are so descriptive that they bring Him before us, on certain occasions, as in a painting, surrounded by the different objects which make Him the centre of interest in a scene actually taking place. From such as these, as

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 34.

well as from our knowledge built up on the theological basis upon which the beauty of our Lord primarily rests, we learn what His habits were, the delicate modesty of His bearing, and yet the power which His glance exercised over those upon whom He looked. We read, for example, that Jesus having gone up into a mountain sat there with His disciples, and when He "had lifted up His eyes, He saw a very great multitude coming to Him."¹ St. Luke uses the like expression, when he describes our Lord about to commence His Sermon on the Plain, as "lifting up His eyes on His disciples, and saying to them: Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven." By this note we learn that it was towards His disciples He turned His eyes, and that to them the first part of His sermon was addressed. A manifest change takes place in the tone of His discourse when He passed on to the multitude, and directed His words for their hearing: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have your consolation."² Two things especially strike us in these passages. The first is that our Lord's habit was to keep His eyes lowered, inasmuch as He was obliged to lift them up in order to see the multitude coming towards Him; and, on the other occasion, to do the same that He might address Himself, in the commencement of His discourse, specially to His disciples. Now our Lord, by reason of His uncreated sanctity, as well as of the perfection of His Soul, had no need for thus guarding His senses. The grace of this modesty was therefore the spontaneous outcome of the uninterrupted union with His Father which held possession of His interior faculties and senses, it was at the same time a modesty which is not a mere external assumption or arbitrarily

¹ St. John vi. 3—5.² St. Luke vi. 20—24.

chosen ornament, but a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord, moreover, was surrounded continually by disciples whom He designed to train, not only in the practice of ordinary Christian virtue, but in the ways of perfection. They must become men of prayer, in order to be able to withstand the perils to which their faith and their love would be exposed, when their Master should be taken from them. They must have their conversation in Heaven, as He Himself had with His Father, and for this end they must disengage their attention from the many useless objects which continually crossed their path. The beauty of the modesty of Jesus must have forcibly affected the minds of the disciples, captivating their hearts, and insensibly perhaps leading them to imitate it.

The second point that strikes us in these details given by the Evangelists, is the importance which they themselves evidently attach to them. St. John had been an eye-witness of the circumstance of which he treats, and, although he wrote his Gospel more than sixty years after our Lord's Ascension, the permission or command given by his Master to the disciples to "lift up their eyes," in order that they might behold the ripening harvest, had not faded from his memory, or if it had, the Holy Ghost recalled the incident to his mind, and, although this in no way affects the essential drift of the narrative, inspired the Apostle to make note of it. The same observation, when found in St. Luke's Gospel, resulted from communications sent to him by those who had been eye-witnesses, upon whose minds it had produced so deep an impression that they had been careful to impart it, years afterwards, to one who was to leave to posterity the written record of our Lord's life.

But although, from what has been seen, we may be assured that modesty in its most lovely aspect was a virtue which lent its especial grace and charm to our Lord's countenance, yet the Gospel narratives afford ample proof of the energy and keenness which He threw into His glance when He lifted up His eyes to embrace in their range all who approached Him. Thus as regards, in the first place, the penetrating and speaking gaze which He turned upon St. Peter immediately after the Apostle's cowardly denial of Him, what volumes of meaning are contained in that short sentence: "And the Lord turning, looked on Peter."¹ The telling effect of that one look from the Divine eyes may be easily conjectured, not only from what we know regarding the beauty of our Lord's countenance, but also from the ever persevering results which are recorded by the Evangelists. It penetrated to St. Peter's inmost soul, and recalled the warning our Lord had given him: "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice; and going out he wept bitterly." The tender reproach conveyed by the glance of Jesus forced its way into the Apostle's heart, and opened therein a fountain of bitter remorse that was never to close until he had shared his Master's fate, and until he had departed thither where the loving hand of Jesus would heal the heart pierced by the arrow of penitential love, and wipe away for ever the tears which till then could never cease to flow. On an occasion long previous to this, St. Peter had felt the influence of the regard of Jesus. The Evangelist relates how "our Lord, looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter."² This was the first time the Apostle had seen our Lord,

¹ St. Luke xxii. 61.² St. John i. 42.

when, being conducted to Him by his brother Andrew, he received his vocation. We must not, in consequence of the partial similarity of the words employed, confound this event with St. Peter's famous confession of faith in our Lord's Divinity. And if we attentively mark the words addressed by Jesus on this later occasion, we observe that He said to His Apostle, "Thou art Peter," whereas before He had merely foretold to him, as a fact of the future, that such should be his new surname. Although we have formal mention of the look which our Lord bestowed on Peter when calling him to the Apostolate, we are not to infer from its omission in their case that this mark of a similar grace was denied to the other disciples. Nothing can be more touchingly simple than is the narrative of their call. We have already, in a previous chapter, dwelt on the power of our Lord's words, a single expression having sufficed to attract to Him men who until then had been occupied in gaining their living by rough material labour. But can we doubt that the attractive power of that word was heightened by the look which assuredly accompanied it, and which, penetrating the souls of those strong men, led them for ever captive to Him? Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Peter and Andrew, James and John, and looking on them, spoke one or two simple words; and they rose up forthwith, impelled by an attraction they had never known before, and left their nets and their father to follow One the beauty of Whose countenance had stolen away their hearts. What wonder was it? God had looked upon them through human eyes, and that look had proved irresistible. The history of the calling of Nathaniel implies the same power in the glance of our Lord's eye, and in the constraining influence

of its every expression. As we read also the call of St. Matthew, we seem to see before us that same look, full of meaning and persuasiveness, which must have accompanied the words, "Follow Me," and have greatly enhanced their mysterious effect.

We must not omit brief mention of the young man who offered himself to be one of our Lord's followers, for allusion is distinctly made to the look given by our Lord, and to its very marked significance. Whilst the hearing of our Lord's words made the young man sorrowful, the eye of Jesus continued to rest upon him, and although he said nothing, our Lord saw all that was passing in his mind. And sorrowfully he went away. How could he feel otherwise? He had looked on the beautiful face of Jesus, and more than that—Jesus had looked on him with love. He had listened to the tones of that voice whose music enchants the angelic choirs, and it had addressed to him words of invitation, it had offered him a favour granted to comparatively few. His heart had been touched, nay, it had been on the point of surrendering, and but for "one thing" that was demanded of him, the generous offer would have been accepted, and the key placed in his hands which would have opened to him all the treasures of Heaven. It was not, however, the young man alone who was sorrowful. The eye of Jesus followed his departing figure, then sadly "looking round about" on His disciples, He began to speak to them in accents that plainly told the grief which lay rankling at His Heart. Perhaps it was some consolation for Him to turn an affectionate regard on those faithful ones before Him. Perhaps, also, He would fain learn from their countenances the impression made on their minds by the defection of the young man.

They were alarmed at the gravity of their Master's language as He continued His discourse, and at length put to Him the difficulty, "Who then can be saved?" It was then that Jesus "looking on them" for the second time, told them plainly how all things were possible with God. In the history of Zacheus also St. Luke tells us that the invitation of Jesus was accompanied by the upward glance of His eyes. He was passing under the tree into which Zacheus, being short of stature, had climbed, that he might be able to see Him. "And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up He saw him," and bade him hasten to descend, for on that day He must abide in his house. It was not necessary that our Lord should look up in order to know that Zacheus was there. The beauty, therefore, of the Divine countenance was turned upon Zacheus for his own sake, and it probably acted upon him no less powerfully than did the word which accompanied it. In fact, he had himself sought "to see Jesus," and our Lord, far from disappointing him in his hope, as usual rewarded him by granting much more than he had expected.¹

As a proof of the confidence inspired by the significant glance of our Lord, we may turn to the narrative of the woman who came behind Him with the view of touching His garment, that she might be healed of an issue of blood. We are told that "He looked about to see her who had done this." Beautiful indeed in their humble confession are the words which describe the effect of that look, timidity and filial fear yielding place to entire confidence and absolute abandonment into the hands of Him Whose gentle eyes expressed only tenderness, and inspired all-confiding

¹ St. Luke xix. 5.

trust. Although full of fear because of the change which she knew had been wrought in her, she nevertheless came forth from the crowd, and, falling down before Him, "told Him all the truth."¹ Not only did love and tenderness and compassion speak to the heart through that "look" of Jesus, but indignation also against all doubters and questioners was expressed by the tranquil dignity inherent in Him, which filled the soul with an awful sense of His beauty and made His calm self-possessed remonstrances to be felt. Thus we read that before He healed the man with the withered hand, knowing that the Pharisees and rulers were present in order to accuse Him, for it was the Sabbath-day, He "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts."² So likewise the very last time He taught in the Temple, after addressing to them the Parable of the Vineyard let out to husbandmen, and explaining how the vineyard would be taken from them and given to others, in words so startling that the Jews answered Him: "God forbid," as though they partly understood the terrible application of the parable to themselves, "Jesus, looking on them, said: What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."³ That penetrating and unflinching gaze which He fixed upon them with a power they could not endure, when united with the solemn words uttered by Him, should have convinced them that He before Whom they stood was indeed the Messiah. And we may be sure that, in this last case, as in the instance cited above, when He cured the man having the withered hand, the indignation manifesting itself upon our Lord's countenance was tempered with

¹ St. Mark v. 33.² St. Mark iii. 5.³ St. Luke xx. 16, 17.

grief for the hardness and blindness of heart He saw in those upon whom His eyes rested. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved."

Nothing escaped the eye of the Son of God; nothing could possibly have done so. It was on the same day, after His final discourse in the Temple, that He went to sit down in one of the courts before leaving it for ever. "And looking on, He saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites." Whence He took occasion to praise the widow's offering, and testify to its value in the sight of God, for the better instruction of the disciples who were around Him.¹ And it is thus He is still "looking on" from the height of Heaven, and watching, not the deeds alone, but the thoughts and intentions of each one of us. There is one episode related by St. Mark which should have a special attraction for us, not only on account of its signal beauty, but on account also of the relation which it bears probably to ourselves. The multitudes sat round our Lord as He was in a certain house teaching. Some of His friends came to tell Him that His Mother and His brethren stood without, and were seeking for Him. He answered them with the question: "Who is My Mother and My brethren? And looking round about on them who sat about Him," to wit, His faithful disciples, "He saith: Behold My Mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother, and My sister, and mother."² How precious in the eyes of the disciples must have been that glance "round about on them," for it marked them out as the persons to whom His words were addressed, and failing that look His

¹ St. Luke xxi. 1, 2.

² St. Mark iii. 34, 35.

words would have been absolutely without point. Can we not imagine that we even catch the affectionate tones of His voice, and see the love beaming forth from His eyes, at the very moment when He is assuring them of the close and intimate relationship in which spiritual ties unite them with Himself, and of the high place they, as His faithful and dear brethren, hold in His Heart. Happy those who, by doing the will of God, merit to be thus associated with Him.

There are other pointed glances of our Lord recorded in the Gospels which must have suggested thoughts of beautiful teaching for those who were privileged to take note of them. Such was the upward gaze which He directed towards Heaven when praying to His Father, as especially mentioned on three different occasions. In the cure of the deaf and dumb man, we read that our Lord, "taking him from the multitude apart," touched his ears and his tongue; "and looking up to Heaven, He groaned," and it was not until after this that He said to the man: "Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened."¹ Previous to the raising of Lazarus also we are told, "Jesus, lifting up His eyes, said: Father, I give thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me."² Again, when on the point of commencing His exquisite prayer to His Father, which He made aloud in the hearing of the Apostles, after the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and probably after they had gone forth from the Cenacle, we read that Jesus, "lifting up His eyes to Heaven, said: Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee."³ In each case the action was beautiful in itself, and in its motive, signifying as it did, that "every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the

¹ St. Mark vii. 33, 34.

² St. John xi. 41.

³ St. John xvii. 1.

Father of lights," to Whom by that upward look the Son would render due glory. But infinitely more beautiful was it in Him Whose countenance was so Divine, and Whose every look and gesture showed forth the loveliness of the Person to Whom His Humanity was united, as well as the perfections of a human Soul enriched, as we have seen, with all the treasures of the Holy Ghost. "Thou art beautiful in form above the sons of men, grace is poured abroad in Thy lips; therefore hath God blessed Thee for ever."¹

We have indicated the occasions whereon special mention is made in the Gospels of the looks of our Blessed Lord, and we have dwelt on them as affording abundant matter for the contemplation of souls charmed by the beauty of the Incarnate Word. But there are innumerable episodes, besides, in which the look of Jesus is implied, even when not formally mentioned. In addressing sinners, in comforting the afflicted, in reproaching the obstinate, we may be assured that the eyes of Jesus rested on the recipients of His graces. Can we imagine Him, for example, speaking to Magdalen, above all when He pronounced her name on the morning of His Resurrection, or absolving the woman taken in adultery, or conversing with the Samaritan woman, or consoling the widow of Naim, or tenderly reproaching the intemperate zeal of His Apostles, or receiving the kiss of Judas, or reproving the hard-heartedness of the Jews, or bringing home to Thomas his too tardy belief, or addressing the thrice-asked question to St. Peter if he loved Him; can it, we repeat, be imagined that any of these incidents were unaccompanied by the regard of the

¹ Psalm xliv. 3.

eyes of Jesus which added so great effect and impressiveness to the words uttered by Him? This was another of the graces of His countenance, another of "the cords of Adam" which both drew hearts to Him through its human loveliness, and at the same time expressed visibly before men the regard of the mind of God, so constantly referred to in the Ancient Scriptures, as God beholding, looking at, and seeing the things He had made.

There is one noted instance, in which we are authorized by the Church herself to attribute to our Lord certain actions and gestures on particular occasions, although they may not be explicitly recorded. For during the most solemn part of her liturgical rite, in the very act of Consecration at Holy Mass, wherein is briefly related the institution of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the priest intimates not only that our Lord "took bread into His holy and venerable hands," but also that "with His eyes lifted up towards Heaven, to God His Almighty Father: giving thanks, He blessed, broke, and gave to His disciples, saying," &c.¹ The Rubric also enjoins that the celebrant shall raise his eyes to Heaven in commemoration of the action of our Lord which the mind of the Church supposes, for nowhere in the sacred writings is it said that when performing this particular act our Lord raised His eyes to Heaven. The Church, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes instinctively how our Lord would act on certain occasions, from the knowledge which she has already acquired of His usual practice. And He Who previous to the raising of Lazarus directed heavenward His thanksgiving to His Father by the solemn lifting

¹ "Et elevatis oculis in cœlum, ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem: tibi gratias agens," &c. (Canon Missæ).

up of His countenance and eyes towards Him, would assuredly do this when about to perform one of His most sacred actions, the institution of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, seeing that His design was to constitute it the sublime act of thanksgiving on the part of the Church, an act perpetually to be renewed by her until the end of time.

As it is with the Church, so it is, in its due degree, with individual souls who are under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Without allowing their imagination—which St. Teresa calls “the fool of the house”—to run riot and lead them into fanciful unrealities that should be termed mental dissipation rather than real prayer, they find a certain interior light diffusing itself through their minds, and bringing out in clear relief before their mental vision, without design or effort on their part, the true manner in which our Lord performed certain of His actions. In all such matters, however, it must ever be remembered that we are bound to be guided by, and to obey the mind of the Church; and we must be especially on our guard against every pious exaggeration or fancy whatsoever, for such as these involve the extinction of all true and intelligent devotion.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TEARS.

And Jesus wept (St. John xi. 35).

THE shortest verse in the entire Gospel narrative contains a mystery of Divine love, an expression of Divine sympathy which eternity itself will not be long enough fully to develop before the contemplation of the saints. It records the shedding, not of the Precious Blood which was necessary for the redemption of the world, but of the tears of Him Who was God, at the sight of human sorrow. Before, however, we consider the particular occasions on which those sacred tears were poured forth, let us pause to reflect a little on this unvoiced language of the emotions in general.

There is an abundant overflow of tears in the world which neither glorifies God nor purifies the soul. We cannot be expected to speak of these, since they have not the slightest connection with our present subject. But there are tears which have their well-spring in hearts broken with sorrow for sin, with compassion for Jesus and His Blessed Mother, with sympathy for the griefs of others, and with bitter lamentation over the loss of souls. There are tears also, less supernatural in their source, but such as may still be to the highest degree supernaturalized by uniting them with the tears of God Incarnate. In our Lord we might consider three motives for His weeping. He might

have been moved to shed tears of compunction, or again of compassion, or once more of pure anguish in His Agony, and in His dereliction upon the Cross. Of the second only of the three is mention made in the Gospel history. The first and the third may be distinctly inferred from the language of St. Paul to the Hebrews, wherein the Priesthood of our Lord is described. "Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him Who was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence."¹ That Jesus shed tears of compunction we may justly believe when we recall that He assumed not merely the form of a servant, but took upon Himself the penalty due to sin. Now, compunction is one of the penances of sin, inflicting an interior wound in the heart; just as exterior penance externally wounds the body, and derives from the former all its true efficacy. If we wish to behold compunction in its perfection it would be necessary to penetrate into the Heart of Jesus. His knowledge and the magnitude of His love for His Eternal Father were the sources whence it flowed, and when we remember that the vision of sin lay ever before Him—not as a thing external to Himself, but even as a reality carried into the very sanctuary of His all-holy Soul, so as to force the anguished cry from Him: "Save Me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto My Soul"—we may form some faint idea of the fathomless depths in the immensity of His sorrow.²

The words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoted above, are worthy of more prolonged attention. And we must, in the first place, observe that Jesus was said to have been heard, not with the effect of His being

¹ Hebrews v. 7.

² Psalm lxxviii. 1.

saved from death, but in this, that His Sacrifice was accepted, and that sinners, for His sake, were redeemed. The vision of sin was stretched out clear to the eye of our Lord throughout the whole of the three-and-thirty years of His life, and He was the predestined victim of sin, as well as the actual bearer of the consequences of sin, during the whole of that time. Who then shall measure the tears of compunction that were shed by Him in secret; who count the agonies of grief He experienced for the sins of mankind, to the extent of their seeming to crush Him beneath their weight. Of Him, before all, are those words of the Royal Prophet to be understood: "Thou hast set My tears in Thy sight."¹ Blessed tears which have merited for us such rich graces of contrition, such manifold pardons, and which have rendered our penitential tears acceptable for the purifying of our souls!

It is to be believed that during the Agony in the Garden, the night before He died, all the sorrows of His life and every possible cause of grief were present to our Lord. His Soul was in an agony so terrible that it drew the sweat of Blood from the pores of His Sacred Body. But if so, did no tears spring forth from those sacred eyes and mingle with the flow of Blood ere the awful *fiat* was pronounced? "With a strong cry and tears, with prayers and supplications, . . . He was heard for His reverence." Again, in the supreme hour of His life, when, abandoned by His Father, He gave utterance to that piteous appeal upon the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Surely we are allowed to believe that the "strong cry" may have been accompanied by at least the rising of tears into their fount, in that combined outpouring of His

¹ Psalm lv. 9.

anguish, filial piety, and reverence. There is less call for doubt as to the probability of our Lord's tears having been shed on the occasions we have referred to, inasmuch as the causes to which we would attribute them owe their origin to the perfections of His Soul and the plenitude of the gifts abiding therein. It was His marvellous possession of all truth which laid bare before His keen inward sense the horror of the world's sin. It was His piety towards His Father which rendered Him so sensitive to the outrage offered Him by that sin, and it was the same piety which filled His Soul with so poignant an anguish at finding Himself abandoned by the Father. It was the might of His prayer and the depth of His reverence that forced from Him the "strong cry and tears" spoken of by St. Paul; and, when is added to all this the tenderness of a perfect human Heart, we may well believe that tears were not strange to the eyes of the God-Man on the occasions of His bitterest trial.

Let us however proceed to the consideration of those tears which the Gospel history actually records, and which only the two Evangelists most noted for the tenderness of their sympathy narrate to us. In both cases the motive of those tears was compassion. St. John, who has left a full description of the raising of Lazarus, tells us in the most concise manner, and as if the mystery were too profound for many words, that "Jesus wept." It is always thus with Divine things. They are clothed in the simplest forms. Nowhere perhaps does the extreme tenderness of the Heart of Jesus disclose itself more clearly, or, so to speak, more humanly than under the circumstances before us. He knew already when He reached Bethania that Lazarus was dead. He had allowed four

days to elapse before going to the aid of the sisters, and this for reasons which His heavenly wisdom inspired; and yet He remained outside Bethania, holding a long conversation with Martha. Nevertheless He had not then shed the tears of which we hear later. What therefore was it that drew them forth? Let the disciple of the Sacred Heart inform us. "When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was, seeing Him she fell down at His feet, and saith to Him: Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died. Therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that were come with her weeping, Jesus groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself, and said: Where have you laid him? They say to Him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept."¹

The knowledge alone of the death of Lazarus had not called forth the tears of Jesus, neither had the manifest sorrow of Martha, much as He had loved them both. But there was one who "sat at home" until the Master's voice had called her; one who had fallen at His feet on another occasion, and had bathed them with tears of penitential love. When therefore Jesus saw Mary and beheld her grief, His Soul was "troubled," and that which the innocent Martha had not obtained, the poor Magdalen, despised by the proud Pharisee, effected. The sight of the penitent's grief drew tears from the Heart of God. The words which the Jews said in connection with Lazarus we may truly say in reference to Magdalen, "Behold how He loved her." The invitation of the Jews to "come and see" where Lazarus was laid, must have caused a species of procession to be formed, moving towards the sepulchre. This would bring more acutely home to

¹ St. John xi. 17—35.

the human Heart of Jesus—who has not felt the same?—a keen realization of His friend's death, and it would also increase the manifestations of grief on the part of the sisters whom He loved so well. He looked upon human grief, and behold tears of sympathy flowed from His Heart! He mourned the death of a friend, and would by His own tears sanctify the tears of all Christian mourners. Nor was this the only instance in the life of Jesus where there was cause for tears. Possibly He may have shed them then, but the circumstance in which we know undoubtedly that He did so, was one in which were manifested the singular tenderness of His love and the ready flow of His sympathy.

The other circumstance wherein the Scriptures record that Jesus wept, was on the day of the Procession of Palms when, descending the Mount of Olives amidst the Hosannas of the multitude and the exultant joy of His disciples, He came in sight of Jerusalem. There it stretched out before Him in its grandeur, all so soon to be laid low. There stood the Temple where He had taught so frequently, and at length had spoken so plainly of His own Divinity. Beneath Him were the familiar streets which He had passed along, while He shed blessings everywhere on His way. His eye rested on each object mournfully, for Jerusalem was dear to His Heart. It had possessed a charm for Him even in His Childhood, when, on His return from Egypt, He yielded Himself to Joseph's guidance and turned aside from it to take the road to Nazareth. But now He looked down on it far more wistfully, for had it not rejected its King? It was about to nail Him to the Cross, and so fill up the measure of its iniquity. Poor Jerusalem! Poor doomed city! Behold thy Saviour

cometh to thee, meek indeed, not only riding on an ass, but shedding tears over the miseries and desolation that are to befall thee, in consequence of thy guilt. "And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it."¹ Thus, in this second instance, the tears of Jesus were drawn forth from the tender compassion of His Sacred Heart, fed by the gently-flowing stream of His piety. Had it been recorded but once of our Blessed Lord that He wept, had we come to know of it only in a phrase of general application, as in the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, it would still have been a mystery exciting in us the profoundest reverence and amazement. Our astonishment is all the greater inasmuch as His weeping was a supererogatory act, one of those ingenuities of His Divine and human love combined, which speak so powerfully to our hearts, and draw us so closely to His own. His desire was to be found, as to all things, "in habit as a man."² He would endear Himself to us by the manifestation of His human susceptibility. He would first of all convince us of the fact, and then open out to us the full measure of its fruitfulness in the depth and tenderness of His human sympathies. He would shed not only Blood, seeing this was absolutely necessary for the remission of our sins,³ He would shed tears also, which were not necessary to that end, but which flowed from the exceeding abundance of His Heart's love, and the indescribable riches of His compassion.

The tears actually recorded in the Gospels to have been shed are not of the same nature as those we find the Saints and Doctors of the Church ascribing to Him during His Infancy, with every mark of probability, inasmuch as He, in all respects, resembled ordinary

¹ St. Luke xix. 41.

² Philipp. ii. 7.

³ Hebrews ix. 22.

infants. But they were the tears of His mature Manhood, shed in the midst of all the dignified self-restraint of His Ministry, and in the presence, not of His chosen friends alone, but of many of those very Jews who rejected His claims to their faith in His Divine Personality. Although the tears which flowed from the eyes of our Divine Lord owed their origin to the perfection of the gifts which resided in His Soul, and to the perfection of every act proceeding from His human Heart, we must nevertheless believe that they were of rare occurrence. They were the tears of Him Who possessed, in all its plenitude, the gift of fortitude as well as that of piety, and the like. They were the tears of the strong man by excellence, the Lion of Juda, of Him Who breaketh in pieces the cedars of Libanus; of Him Who, though He will cast out no one approaching Him in humility of heart, yet scatters far from Him the proud, and puts down the mighty from their seat; of Him, in fine, Who will come in the might of His power and the triumph of His Humanity, to judge the nations, and Who tearless then, unmoved, and immovable, shall pronounce the terrible sentence upon the wicked: "Depart from Me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." The tears that rarely flow are the tears of the strong, and when such are shed, we may be assured that they spring from fountains within the soul, whose sources lie deep indeed.

In contemplating however the human tears of Jesus, and in yielding ourselves up to the charm of the tenderness which they disclose to us, we must not forget that they are, like all other principles and qualities in our Lord, worthy of our adoration, as being shed by the Person of the Divine Word in His Human Nature. They are not the tears of a mere man. "They are

theandric operations by which the Incarnate Word presents and manifests itself to be adored.”¹

The tears of Jesus form a rich treasure of which we are in possession, that we may use them in the interest of our own salvation and sanctification, and in that of our brethren. Will the Divine Father forget the tears that His only-begotten Son shed during His weary exile upon earth? It behoves us to remind Him of them, to “set them before Him,” and to unite our own tears with those of our Incarnate God. Our tears of imperfect sorrow for sin will be rendered available through the perfection of those which He shed “with a strong cry, and was heard for His reverence.” Our tears of too natural a grief when undergoing the sufferings our Heavenly Father sends us, will become purified, and supernaturalized in the recollection of those blessed tears of sympathy and compassion which flowed from the eyes of our Divine Lord at the sight of human grief, and the contemplation of the doomed city.

Tears can soften and chasten the heart without rendering it effeminate, provided they are mingled in our intention with the tears of Him Who, during the days of His flesh, did not disdain to shed them. Such tears as these, even if they spring up from the earth, have their first source on high, so that of them we may say: “O all ye waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord.” And such waters shall refresh us in the midst of the fiery furnace of this world, and one walketh with us in the midst of the fire, and His form is “like the Son of God.”²

¹ Franzelin, *De Verbo Incarnato*, thesis 44.

² Daniel iii. 92.

CHAPTER XXV.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS SIGHS.

And sighing deeply in spirit, He saith : Why doth this generation ask a sign ? (St. Mark viii. 12).

So much has been left recorded for us in Holy Scripture regarding the sorrows of our Lord, the "trouble" also which He permitted to invade His Soul, the "wonder" and "astonishment" which He condescended to experience at certain periods, the tears which He shed, besides other testimonies by which we recognize Him to be truly, though not merely, Man, that it does not surprise us to find the Evangelists making mention even of the sighs which escaped from His Sacred Heart, and were audible to those who stood near Him.

A sigh is not always significative of any particular emotion, indeed it often breaks from our lips without any distinct cause or meaning. Sighing may be the result of a most transient impression, of some thought which in passing leaves not a trace behind, it may even proceed from a purely physical affection or defect. It was not thus, of course, with our Lord. His sighing, or "groaning in the spirit," betokened some deep emotion which rested within His Soul. The breath of the Holy Spirit acted on the sensitiveness of His Sacred Heart, and drew from It outward manifestations of Its sympathy according to the counsel of His Divine wisdom. His sighs, no less than His tears, His words,

and His more ordinary actions, were worthy of admiration on account of the fount whence they flowed. They were all equally the operations of a Divine Person, although wrought through the medium of His Humanity.

Judging from the occasions wherein special mention is made of the sighs or groans of Jesus, there must have been innumerable other moments during His life, in which He would probably bear external testimony, in the same way, that He desired "in habit to be found as a man." St. Mark, when narrating the cure of the deaf and dumb man, states that, before uttering the word which was to open the ears of the deaf man and unloose his tongue, our Lord "looking up to heaven, groaned." By this act we may understand that Jesus gave vent to one of those profound sighs which came forth from the depth of His interior being, a depth which it is not given us here below to fathom. But we may, without irreverence, conjecture, to some extent at least, its causes by help of certain manifestations springing from our knowledge of our Lord, as well as from other sources.¹

St. Matthew and St. Luke, in relating the cure of the man in question, speak of him as possessed with a devil, so as to render him dumb. It would seem probable that our Lord, when looking on the miserable condition of this man, beheld in him the figure of those many souls whom the machinations of the evil one have rendered deaf to His voice, and tongue-tied to confess Him before men. He may have had, moreover, painfully present before Him the large number of those who, after being delivered from the thralldom of the devil, as He was about to deliver the man before Him,

¹ St. Mark vii. 34.

would again deliberately bind round themselves the chains from which they had been freed, and become once more spiritually deaf and dumb, to their eternal loss. At the raising of Lazarus to life we are again told that our Lord "groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself," words which testify that He had voluntarily permitted this trouble to come upon Him. His sighing in the spirit, His repressed manifestation of inward affliction, may probably have been elicited by the vision of those countless spiritual deaths, of which the natural death of Lazarus was a figure. Added, however, to this, or rather perhaps antecedent to it, was the human sympathy felt by His human Heart for the grief of those whom He loved so well, together with His human sorrow for the death of His friend.

But yet the sympathy and the sorrow must have been profound indeed to have provoked that deep-drawn sigh on the part of one Who was governed in all things by the spirit of wisdom, of piety, and of fortitude. The Evangelist tells us that this sigh or "groaning in Himself" was repeated when our Lord came to the sepulchre and saw where they had laid His "friend" who was dead. If we turn to St. Matthew's Gospel, we discover sufficient cause for the sigh there mentioned as escaping from our Lord. "The Pharisees came forth and began to question with Him, asking Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him. And Jesus, sighing deeply in spirit, saith: Why doth this generation ask a sign?"¹ He declared that a sign should not be given to it except, as another Evangelist tells us, "the sign of Jonas the Prophet."² He was pained to see them still so obstinate, still so incredulous, despite all the miracles they had witnessed,

¹ St. Mark viii. 11, 12.

² St. Luke xi. 29.

evidence amply sufficient of itself to have convinced them. He still saw them so full of malice that they sought to "tempt Him" by asking a sign, with the hope of provoking Him into some act inconsistent with His claim of having "God as His Father." It was an example of the same kind of diabolical policy which Herod manifested, and also of the taunt so insultingly flung in His face, to descend from the Cross if He were the Christ, pretending that they would then believe. Doubtless, these were present in our Lord's mind as supplementary to the malicious act of those who now tempted Him, and gave increased intensity to the grief which lay on His Heart, and to the sigh which so plaintively made confession of its pain.

There were, however, others ready to make the same request, not indeed equally actuated by malice, but well-nigh as incredulous; these too must have been before His mind, because His knowledge rendered all things present to Him. Such are souls who, not content with their Father's will, would fain demand a sign. They place no faith in ordinary events; the Cross is to them a stumbling-block, and so they "would see a miracle." They can no longer demand of our Lord that He should come down from the Cross, wherefore they profess to believe in His power, or in His goodness, or in His love for them, but only on condition that He will let *them* descend from it. Souls such as these—and we ourselves are, or have been, perhaps of their number—were beheld afar off by our Lord "in the days of His flesh" and were among the motives of His sighs. But there were other occasions upon which we may be sure that grief and weariness and disappointment drew sighs from His Heart, seeing that it was so human in all Its susceptibilities, and

yet withal so Divine. In His many interviews with the Jews, wherein their hard-heartedness and hatred of Him were, in the depth and darkness of their colouring, made so palpable, and afforded such a terrible augury of their approaching reprobation, surely we may believe our Lord "sighed deeply in spirit." More especially is it probable that His Sacred Heart similarly expressed the grief that weighed upon It, in His final conversations with the same people, when as His hour drew nigh He beheld the failure of His Mission in regard to so many.

But still more clearly do the sighs of Jesus fall upon our ear in many events of His intercourse with His Apostles. As for instance, when Peter sought to deter Him from going to meet His Passion at the time that He foretold it to the disciples; or when the same Apostle called forth from our Lord an expression of astonishment at his slowness in understanding the mysteries which had been taught him. There was also that exhibition of intemperate zeal on the part of the Apostles which betrayed their inability, after long spiritual training, to profit by His teaching and example. Again, on the last night of His life, when He sat with the chosen band and heard them contending amongst themselves which should be the greatest, when also He saw the traitor go forth, and knew for what purpose he had gone; when, later on, the same unhappy Apostle approached to give his Lord the treacherous kiss which was to point out the Sacred Person of Jesus to His foes; and at the moment when the Heart that yet loved him and would have freely pardoned him had he sought forgiveness, pressed for an instant against his own in that dread embrace, **surely the sigh, laden with a more terrible grief than**

that Heart had ever yet known, must have struck with a sensation of pain upon the false "friend's" ear. Would that it had found its way, along with repentant sorrow, into his callous heart, as assuredly all the beauty and love of a long-suffering patience, concentrated within that sigh, might well have been expected to do.

When our Lord saw Himself abandoned by all His disciples, and a little after heard Himself thrice denied by the Apostle whom He had chosen to be the visible Head of His Church, did no deep-drawn sigh escape from Him? And when issuing from Pilate's hall, robed and crowned as a mock King, He beheld the crowd of scowling upturned faces, amongst whom He must have recognized many who had been the recipients of His favours, truly the Heart which throbbed with the love of a Saviour towards His people, must have given vent to Its anguish by one of those long-drawn sighs which are the "unspeakable groanings" of the spirit. On innumerable other occasions the "sighing in spirit" of our Blessed Lord rises upon our ear with a gentle murmur so expressive of His patience and resignation. Especially beautiful were those sighs which, though proceeding from a Divine Person, yet interpreted so faithfully the susceptibilities of the Heart that, according to the instincts of Its own human nature, did actually breathe them forth. Each one was filled to overflowing with most Divine sentiment, including even that last sigh, which amid the torments of the Passion rendered up His tranquil Spirit into the Father's bosom. How many times, during the weary exile of the three-and-thirty years, had not the sighs of Jesus poured forth their language of sorrow into the same ear of the Most High, in the hearing of which

they sounded as the softest and sweetest of earth's music. How irresistible a power of supplication and of persuasiveness was borne upward in their gentle pleadings. What depth, what eloquence of argument in our behalf made itself heard through their unspoken appeals.

The sighs of Jesus are then our possession, rich in promise for our souls' good, even as are His tears and every expression of His most truly human emotions. We may offer them up to God for our own eternal interests and for those of our brethren, in our own name, and in that of the "Son of Man;" and we may beg of our Lord to apply their abundant merits in reparation and compensation for the hardness and insensibility of our hearts. Had we but one tear or one sigh of Jesus to plead in our favour, thrice happy should we be. Lastly, we may unite our own sighs to His, above all, our sighs of penitential compunction and sorrow for sin. So shall the "sighing of the prisoners" enter into the sanctuary, to reach the ear and touch the Heart of the Most High.

CHAPTER XXVI.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS FORTITUDE.

In thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience (Ecclus. ii. 4)

“THE whole life of Christ upon earth was a cross and a martyrdom,” says the *Imitation*; and this carries with it the assured truth, that His entire life was passed in doing the will of His Heavenly Father. But whilst all Christians will accept the assertion in its general and abstract form, the faith of many persons seems staggered when there is question of considering, in how much that happened to our Divine Lord He was apparently a mere passive agent. It is, however, of the utmost importance that we should acknowledge our Lord to have been doing His Father’s will on these occasions, as truly as on those other wherein His own force and individual action as Man was more visible.

It is necessary to distinguish between the will of God commanding, and the same will permitting certain events and circumstances. This is a distinction known to theologians, but frequently little understood by others, who thus practically wander so far from the truth as to ignore the will of the Supreme Ruler of all things in occurrences which appear conducive rather to His dishonour than to His glory. Now, as there are two different ways by which God expresses His one and indivisible will, so there are two different ways by which we do that will, namely, by acting and by

suffering. In either way we are obeying the will of God, whether it be His imperative or His permissive will. Both are holy, both adorable, both the object of the eternal praise and homage offered up by the heavenly citizens. Both—and this is a matter which brings us to our present subject—require, on the part of those who would be perfect, and truly “conformed to the image of the Son of God,” that fortitude which is not only a cardinal virtue, but one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus Christ. As there is on the part of God His imperative and His permissive will, as there is on the part of creatures an active and a passive co-operation with that will, so there is likewise an active and a passive fortitude, both of which have their place amongst the cardinal virtues, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, though under different aspects.

Of the first it belongs not to us to speak here. It bears, of itself, witness to its own excellence. It is seen to full perfection in the grand heroism of the saints of the Old Law. But there was another and a fairer flower, stronger and more richly hued, which sprang up beneath the genial influence of the law of grace. This one was destined to be brought down to us on the wings of the Heavenly Dove, and to be manifested in all its perfection and its loveliness in Him Whose Soul was the living tabernacle, wherein that Dove was to rest with all the plenitude of His gifts. From the crib to the Cross, the life of Jesus is the perfect exemplar of that passive fortitude which is the gift of the Spirit of Love. The Father’s will in regard of Jesus, as of His chosen friends, means sorrow, and pain, and crucifixion. This was our Lord’s “meat,” His “daily bread” for three-and-thirty years; but His suffering was not

always to be externally manifested. Who could have perceived, while they beheld the Babe peacefully nestling in His Mother's bosom, that nothing short of the perfection of fortitude could have enabled Him to endure the anguish even then pressing on His Infant Heart? Who suspected, during those long tranquil years at Nazareth, the existence of a mental sorrow heavy enough to crush Him beneath its weight but for the sublime fortitude wherewith His Soul endured it all, and waited in silence upon the will of His Heavenly Father. Who, save Himself, beheld that fearful vision of sin which lay ever before His inward eye, sickening in its loathsomeness, terrible in its consequences for Himself, and not even delaying to make Him its innocent victim.

The silent and calm endurance of a life-long sorrow has in it a grandeur which surpasses that of every other suffering. But when such sorrow as this, in addition to its being life-long, is carefully guarded from the knowledge of all but him whose soul it possesses, it then assumes a character so overwhelming to the human heart in its natural yearning for the sympathy of its brethren of mankind, that, without the gift of fortitude, such a life was scarcely supportable. Now, what is any sorrow which the heart of man ever has known, or could possibly know, in comparison with that which filled the Soul of Jesus, not for a few years of His mortal life, but from end to end? Not all the warrior saints, the confessors of the Old or the New Law, have stood in need of such courage as that which was required for the life of inward martyrdom led by the Son of God. This is a courage little understood, and less appreciated, by the greater part of mankind. Lives of secret heroism may be led in our very midst, while we do not suspect

it. We recognize and admire the active fortitude of those who, with peril to their lives or liberty, defend the Faith, who stand forth as champions in the field of battle, or who expose their own lives in the care of the fever-stricken. And we are right in tendering to such the tribute of our admiration. But this is only active fortitude, and not necessarily the gift of the Holy Ghost, the perfection of which is shown in its passiveness, according to the testimony of the son of Sirach, whose exhortations are directed to encourage, not so much activity, as endurance. "Humble thy heart, and endure," he writes, and "make not haste in the time of clouds. Join thyself to God and endure. . . . Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience."¹ Such is fortitude in its highest perfection, it is not acting, but suffering; and this is indeed the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There are those who for ten, twenty, thirty years, perhaps from earliest youth, have been held prostrate on a bed of sickness. Others who have during long years suffered from cruel calumnies, not perhaps from such open persecution as would have gained for them a general sympathy, but from the secret sting of the tongue thrust forth by persons whose malice was little suspected, and was thus able, all the more covertly, to rob their victims of that which was dearest to them upon earth. Others again have from year's end to year's end been buffeted by secret temptations, tried by the apparent abandonment of God, and deprived perhaps, in addition, of every human help. To support any one of these trials in continued silence, in meek resignation to the eternal will which has appointed or

¹ Ecclus. ii. 2, 3, 4.

permitted them, to unite our human hearts, despite their passions and susceptibilities, to the heart of God, and in a spirit of praise to adore His inscrutable designs—this is fortitude in its passive character—this is fortitude in its perfection—this is that fortitude which undoubtedly is the gift of the Holy Ghost.

But whence has this gift come to those who have received it? Our Lord Himself tells us, in the course of that long conversation of most heavenly illumination and instruction which He held with His Apostles in the Cenacle. Speaking of the Holy Ghost Whom He would send, He says: "He shall glorify Me, because He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it to you."¹ Our Lord, Who came into this world to reconcile man to God, has been, and is, the medium through Whom men receive the Holy Ghost, together with His gifts. He passes, so to speak, through Jesus to us, and conveys into our souls a share of the fulness of grace that dwells in our Lord. Thus, in infusing into us the gifts of filial fear, of piety, of fortitude, and the rest, He "shows them to us," as these gifts were called forth into action in the Son of God. He illuminates our minds to contemplate these gifts in Jesus, and, at the same time, He touches our hearts, rendering them docile to imitate what we see in Him. It is this truth we observe instanced in so many of the saints and servants of God. But because, strange to say, we are ordinarily more attracted to the contemplation of supernatural beauty in the souls of men like ourselves, than in Him Who is the Source of all beauty, we care only to cite examples of it from the lives of our fellow-men, instead of concentrating our attention upon the unapproachable loveliness of the

¹ St. John xvi. 14.

Incarnate Word, somewhat after the manner which the present work is designed to suggest.

Allusion has already been made to the grandeur of His silent endurance, of the mental sufferings inflicted on His Soul by the life-long vision of sin. But there were other and more easily recognized testimonies to the perfection of our Lord's fortitude which will clearly illustrate how sublime was the beauty of its passive endurance in His Sacred Person. Yet first, let us examine into the sources of this spirit of fortitude in ourselves. It emanates from a profound sense of God's surrounding presence. Whithersoever we go, He is there, there with His omnipotence, there with His watchful providence, there with His supreme dominion, there with His Father's love at His command. Now, what being ever had such infallible assurance of the Father's presence as had His Divine Son? We most certainly share in it also, but in ways far different from those in which our Lord possessed it. For Jesus was the Son of God, in the same Divine Nature, One with the Father before all ages. Upon this truth, when speaking to the Jews, He repeatedly insisted, saying: "I and the Father are One. . . . Believe the works; that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."¹ This, His unity with the Father, is the Divine source of the fortitude of Jesus, and therefore it was inherent in Him, everything being common between the Father and the Son.

Another source of our Lord's fortitude may be traced to the love which the Father bore to His Son and to the Sacred Humanity, to which that Son was hypostatically united. To this love, which surrounded and watched over Him, our Lord gave testimony on

¹ St. John x. 30, 38.

the night before His Passion, when about to be seized by His enemies, for He said to one of His Apostles who had drawn a sword in His defence: "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels."¹ And on that same night, but a few hours previously, when He had foretold to them how they would forsake Him and leave Him alone, He added: "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."² On another occasion, in speaking to the Jews, He bore similar witness to the abiding presence of the Father with His beloved Son: "And He that sent Me is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone."³

These two sources, to which may be referred the fortitude so resplendent in our Lord, are distinctive of Himself. They are His as the Word of God, and they belong to His Humanity as being assumed by the Word, and hypostatically united to Him. He alone could say: "I and the Father are One," and the Humanity He had assumed stood alone as the object of the Father's complacency by reason of its union with the Person of His Son. Our sonship is secondary and adoptive. We stand in that relationship to the Father, because of our Elder Brother through Whom we are indeed made sons, but sons by adoption. It is only in this sense that we can say: "The Father is with me, I am not alone." His Paternal Providence surrounds us, and wheresoever we are, or at whatever moment we appeal to Him, His Omnipotence overshadows us and He is ready to send His angels to defend us, as He would have done to His only-begotten Son, had He asked Him.

The third source of the fortitude of Jesus lies in the

¹ St. Mark xxvi. 53.

² St. John xvi. 32.

³ St. John viii. 29.

inherent riches of His own Soul, which possessed all the gifts of the Spirit in their fulness; and, under this head, fortitude belongs to Him inasmuch as it was one of those gifts bestowed on Him "without measure." Not only was the vision of all sin that ever had been, or would be, committed continually present to our Lord's mind, preying upon His Heart, and making of His whole life a secret martyrdom; but He was, moreover, surrounded by sinners, the sight of whose sins was a constant torture to His sacred eyes, while the hearing of them was an ever recurring offence to His ear. He had to pass an entire lifetime in the midst of a gross and sinful world, the penalty of whose guilt was accumulating upon Himself with each fresh crime that was being perpetrated. Thus situated He "was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things, and His sorrow was renewed."¹ Here is exemplified to us the perfection of fortitude. Where men, good men too, would have been on fire to speak, Jesus the Eternal Wisdom, the Strength of God, was silent.

If we consider Him in His Public Ministry, we hear Him assailed by false accusations, by the insidious insinuation that He was Himself a sinner because of His merciful friendship towards sinners, and by many other taunts and aspersions, whereby the Jews sought to bring derision on His claims and to ensnare Him in His speech and behaviour. We see Him also engaged in long and tedious arguments, resulting apparently in little else than failure—an issue which He Himself foresaw, as He did every disappointment that would ever attend His labours. Nevertheless, He held on His way tranquilly pursuing the work before Him, as though every part of it were certain of success. But

¹ Psalm xxxviii. 3.

it was when His life drew towards its close that the perfection of our Lord's fortitude manifested itself in its highest grandeur. Then especially did Jesus present Himself to us as a model for the imitation of those souls whom He requires to glorify Him and His Father by passive suffering, and who, in the words of Holy Writ, are called upon to bear meekly everything that shall befall them, and "in their sorrow to endure, and in their humiliation to keep patience." Never has there existed so great perfection of fortitude as that manifested by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when pronouncing the *fiat* which expressed His submissive acceptance of the chalice then presented to Him. We think we see Him as He lay there prostrate upon the ground, struck with the mortal agony which seemed to overwhelm Him, and which forced the sweat of Blood from His Sacred Body. All the flood-gates of sorrow were then opened out at once, that the bitter waters might flow through them into His Soul. Yet what is it that we hear in this hour of terrible anguish? It is a word full of sublime resignation, by reason of the tranquil strength wherewith it was uttered—"Thy will be done." From that moment Jesus became the passive Victim of His Father's justice, and from it began the fulfilment of the prophecy, "He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer."¹ Mark well that which follows. The traitor's kiss opens the tragic drama, and from it the Victim does not recoil. The armed band is about to seize Him, and He will suffer them to tear His flesh with cords, and bind Him fast as their captive. They will drag Him from tribunal to tribunal, where false witnesses rise up

¹ Isaias liii. 7.

and all manner of calumnies are alleged against Him, and yet no word passes His lips, no gesture of dissent, even for a moment, disturbs the beautiful serenity of His countenance. He suffers them to blindfold Him, and then to insult Him with the sneering insinuation that He could not declare who struck Him. He receives their grossest outrage, the insult of spitting in His sacred face, and still not the slightest movement testifies any resentment.

Before the Roman Governor our Lord's silence is such that, in face of the accusations brought against Him, Pilate asks whether He has not heard how great testimonies are alleged against Him. And still finding that Jesus preserved an unalterable silence, "the Governor wonders exceedingly." In the next place, Jesus receives the mock homage offered to Him as a pretended King, bearing in silence, not alone their insult, but all this while the agonized grief, caused by the knowledge that their rejection of Him, their rightful King, would only bring about their own reprobation. Never was fortitude exhibited equal to that which Jesus testified all through the night preceding His Passion, spent by Him in prison amidst the jeers and ribald outrages of a brutal soldiery. And yet was He called upon to show equal fortitude under a different mode of insult, and one harder to bear. He heard the terms of the final condemnation, the proclamation that He was "worthy of death." He had to enter upon that last sad journey, every stage of which witnessed the passive suffering of Him in Whose Person we behold, not simply the fortitude which is steadfast in perils, but that which strengthens us to accept everything that shall be brought upon us.

The Cross is laid upon His torn and bleeding

shoulders, and He receives it meekly, and goes forth, tottering indeed beneath its fearful weight, but with a conqueror's spirit in the fortitude that enables His Soul to accept the burden. Three times He falls, while carrying it, because He will not allow His Divinity to impart strength to His Humanity, and thus He sinks down exhausted with pain and weakness, unable to rise again until they drag Him and goad Him on like some overcharged beast of burden. At length, when arrived at the place of execution, He suffers them to cast Him down upon the Cross and extend His members as they will, and drive holes through them with the nails which attach Him fast to the fatal tree that was to become for men the source of life. And there He hangs, for three long hours, amid the scoffs of the soldiery and of the people whom He had come to save. "And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads." "And they cried out, in allusion to the words He had spoken in the Temple:¹ "Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thy own self; if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. In like manner also, the chief priests with the scribes and ancients mocking said: If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him now deliver Him if He will nave Him: for He said: I am the Son of God. And the self-same thing the thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him with."² And when they heard the great cry of the dereliction, they said: "This Man calleth for Elias," and others answered in scoffing words: "Let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him." Finally, as if resolved that His last

¹ St. John ii. 19.² St. Matt. xxvii. 40—44.

moment should be in an especial manner expressive of submission to all that was brought upon Him, and of acceptance of all the Father's will, either appointed or permitted, with His last *fiat* expressed in act, "Bowing His head, He gave up the ghost."¹

We have enumerated all these events and called particular attention to them, because our Lord by enduring each one in perfect silence and meekness, illustrates what has been said of fortitude in its passive character, and in its perfection as a gift of the Holy Ghost. Never has it been so perfectly practised as it was by Jesus; but wherever we witness calm constant endurance of suffering, whether it be inflicted directly by the hand of God, or through the medium of creatures, whether it comes from pain of body, or anguish of mind, or sorrow of heart, we may feel assured that the souls of those who thus passively endure have a distinct share in the gift of fortitude, as it dwelt with the full abundance of its plenitude only in the divinely endowed Soul of Jesus. Men such as these may not perform actions generally accredited as heroic, but their heroism is really one of a higher order. They may not undertake works claiming to be styled great, nor do anything to cause even the limited circle of their acquaintance to sound forth their praises, but they are martyrs before God and His angels, and their living deaths are so much the more precious in His sight, as their endurance is more hidden and more passive in its character.

We should here say a word with reference to the term *passive*, which has been frequently used when speaking upon this subject. In order to avoid misconception, let it be premised that, however passive

¹ St. John xix. 30.

we may hold ourselves under suffering, the will that accepts that suffering is anything but passive. The very fact of accepting what is painful to nature involves a most noble and vigorous activity. Such was the character of the reply of our Immaculate Lady, the Blessed Mother of God, when she consented to the mystery of her Divine Maternity, which, although most glorious in itself, involved unparalleled suffering. Such again was her inward acceptance of the will of God, when Simeon's prophecy smote her ear; and that activity reached its perfection when she stood a passive victim motionless beneath the Cross, feeling that her broken heart was nailed to it along with her dying Son. Each and all of her after-sorrows were the consequence of our Lady's first consent. She was the victim of the Father's will in union with her Divine Son. She was the victim of that Son Himself, and, if we may say so, she was the victim of the Holy Spirit, Who found in her spotless soul a pure white page whereon to write His characters, and He took the blood of her heart, where-with to write them. In all this we behold our Lady a passive victim, but her will was all the while joining itself incessantly in fullest acquiescence to the will which crucified her, and herein we see the gift of fortitude more nobly and more perfectly exemplified than it ever was, save in the Son of God Himself. Throughout the whole of the three-and-thirty years, our Lord was passively submitting to all that His Father's will inflicted on Him through the medium of creatures, but His human will was co-operating most actively with His Father, the *fiat voluntas tua* being a perpetual hymn of praise within His Soul.

One other remark may here be made which, though somewhat digressive, will not be out of place in days

when every kind of error seems running riot through the world, and seizing hold, to a certain extent, upon the minds of the "children of the Kingdom." In considering the permissive will of God as distinct from His imperative will, we must be careful to avoid a certain optimism into which some allow themselves to be ensnared, by which they seem to misunderstand and turn to pernicious use the assertion that "whatever is, is best." God, it is true, in His infinite wisdom, knows how to draw good out of evil, and to glorify Himself by means that appear most contrary to that end. Thus by the crucifixion of His Divine Son the redemption of the world was effected. Nevertheless, our Lord prayed that, if it were possible, so terrible a crime might be averted. Yet, if men could not be brought to see the malice of sin in any other way than by the Death of the Incarnate Son of God, so be it—*fiat voluntas tua*. This proves that when a real evil, and not merely sorrow or pain or suffering of any kind, for these are not necessarily evils, but sin itself is looming in the distance, we should employ prayer and every other means consistent with the law of God, for averting it. If God, however, for His own wise and inscrutable purposes, permits the evil to be committed, our duty is to adore His Divine permission. But if the evil be remediable, we should endeavour to remove it, still continuing to revere God's will, as long as He shall be pleased to permit the evil to prevail.

As an example taken from our own times, we stand at the present moment in face of the sacrilegious invasion made upon the rights of the Church. As long as the Holy City could be preserved inviolate the soldiers of the Church were bound to withstand the entrance of the enemy, and to shed their life-blood in defence

of so glorious a cause, as many of them actually did. But God permitted a breach to be effected at the Porta Pia, and allowed the captivity of His Vicar and many other serious evils to follow that terrible event. But does He therefore will that the children of the Church should fold their hands, and calmly say: "Whatever is, is best," for, since God has permitted them, He evidently wills these things to be. It is true He permitted the first evil to take place, but who could think that He wills His Church to be shackled in her Divine mission, to be robbed of the souls of her little ones, and sacrileges and profanations to be multiplied in her midst, without her children doing their best to check the progress of these calamities? To think this would be a morbid optimism, as far from the truth as is that self-sufficient obstinacy, which refuses to acknowledge the Divine permission in events from which, according to human reason, no good can result.

What is it then that God desires of us under such circumstances, in addition to prayer, earnest, constant prayer that He will turn again and visit His Vineyard? He desires also vigorous and united action against the enemies of His Church, and withal patient and reverent adoration of His inscrutable designs, as long as He shall permit the evil to last. For this, fortitude is needed, not that active fortitude which is caused by the mere vigour of nature desirous of finding relief in the exercise of its power, but that which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus, of Him "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly;"¹ the spirit of Him Who "did not resist;" "Who gave His body to the strikers, and

¹ 1 St. Peter ii. 23.

His cheeks to them that plucked them;" Who "turned not away His face from them that rebuked Him, and spit upon Him."¹

This is the fortitude of the "obedient Man" Who "shall speak of victories," the Man "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," Who, if we may dare to draw comparisons between the different operations effected in His Sacred Person, appears more beautiful in the passive fortitude by which He endures these things, "waiting with silence for the salvation of God," than even in the majesty of His authoritative teaching, and in the might of His marvellous works.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS DISFIGUREMENTS.

I am black but beautiful. . . . Do not consider Me that I am brown, because the sun hath altered My colour (Cant. i. 4, 5).

WE have in the course of this work considered the beauty of Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, under divers aspects. We have contemplated Him in His Passion and in His weakness, in the exercise of His authority and in His silence, in His sorrows and in His joys, in the loveliness of His countenance and in the charm and grace displayed in His actions. And under each of these aspects we have found fresh beauty, irresistible in its attraction to every soul whose spiritual eye is not closed to the discernment of supernatural loveliness.

We are now about to contemplate our Lord under altogether a new aspect, and that we may still discover

¹ Isaias l. 5, 6.

beneath it JESUS THE ALL-BEAUTIFUL, we stand in need not only of the vivid touch of faith, but also the burning fire of Divine charity, for love is quick-sighted, and detects with faultless accuracy the beauty of the Beloved beneath the veils that fain would hide it. At the very outset, the prophetic words of Scripture put our faith to the test, appearing, as they do, to contradict all that has until now been adduced. "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness; and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him, . . . the most abject of men and acquainted with infirmity, . . . and His look was as it were hidden and despised, . . . whereupon we esteemed Him not, . . . we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."¹ What could be more subversive of all our preconceived conceptions of the beauty of the Incarnate Word than expressions like these. In His sorrows there was a pathos, possessing for many souls greater attractions than His joys. In His silence we behold a majesty, to the charm of which few could be insensible. In His weakness dwells a magnetic force, alluring our hearts to love Him. His humiliations, considered apart from anything which may be in them of a disfiguring character, are ennobled by an unassuming dignity and greatness, unmistakably enhanced by the marked contrast which exists between those abasements in themselves and the loftiness and sacredness of the Person in Whom they are found. Thus, under not one of these aspects, is the beauty of our Lord really hidden, for under some form or other it reveals itself as clearly present there.

But when we come to consider our Lord in His disfigurements, as they are depicted to us by the

¹ Isaiah liii. 2, 3, 4

Prophets, and as they found their fulfilment in His Sacred Person, where at first sight shall we discover any trace of the beauty of the "Flower of the field," rendering Him "beautiful above the children of men"? Where is the latent power, hitherto visible in the calm dignity of every movement? Where the penetrating, yet tender regard of those eyes, one glance of which was able to convert hearts, to draw disciples to follow Him, and change St. Peter into a life-long penitent? Where the majestic step and bearing that once so characterized Him, and where those gestures so replete with grace and power of expression? All is now changed, not in semblance only, but in very fact. The blows our Lord received in the house of the High Priest inflicted injury on His sacred countenance, in proportion to the violence of each stroke. That face, so exquisitely perfect in its lineaments and complexion, is now bruised, discoloured, and wholly disfigured, so as to be well-nigh past recognition. The savage scourging with thongs had wrought in His entire Body as sad effects as the blows had caused on His holy face, with this terrible aggravation that the flesh was torn to shreds and its surface lined with streams of Blood. As His features had been wounded and marred by the hands that struck Him, so were His limbs almost paralyzed and disabled through pain. Each change of His vesture opened out anew the cruel wounds, so that our Lord's Body presented the appearance of a form of mangled flesh. At length His tormentors, thirsting to complete His utter disfigurement, wove together low down upon that noble brow the crown of thorns, forcing them so deeply into His forehead, that, as we may well believe, some of the points penetrated the eyelids, whence issued streams of Blood.

Then they laid the Cross upon His shoulders and led Him forth on His last sad journey, manifesting His disfigurements to every one in all their terrible accumulation. He passed onward, and though still in the prime and vigour of His Manhood, staggered, not only because of the burden that was laid upon Him, but by reason of the deadly weakness to which the merciless treatment He received had already reduced His mortal frame. His sacred limbs were stiffened by the partially dried sores left from the stripes; His breathing had grown laboured, as the result of the injuries done to His breast and shoulders. Thus did He proceed on His way more sick and maimed than any of those whom He had formerly cured, more "stricken by God" than the worst cases of infirmity ever brought to Him for healing, until, no longer able to support the heaped-up agonies now accumulating with every step, or the growing strain upon His already over-taxed strength, His knees trembled beneath Him, and He fell three times, more utterly helpless than when as an Infant He had been encouraged to walk alone, or than would have been the very paralytics whom He so mercifully healed, had they too been left unaided. It was, however, evident at length that pain and exhaustion threatened to deprive His enemies of the fiendish satisfaction of suspending their Victim upon the infamous gibbet prepared for Him; and so, to avoid this, they laid the Cross upon a stranger whom they met on the way coming up from the country. Relieved of His burden, our Lord was just able to proceed, dragging after Him His tortured limbs, faltering in His gait, quivering in every nerve, a fearful tension racking every muscle of His Body. And in this condition it was that He reached the summit of the ascent. There,

still further outrages were to be inflicted. Suffering and anguish distorted yet more that heavenly countenance, the lines of which were now drawn and furrowed by the agony of death on the Cross. As the nails pierced through the hands and feet, they too were mangled and contorted, whilst the stretching of the arms to make them meet the holes prepared in the wood, caused the whole Body to contract and to lose every trace of its former symmetry.

And then when all was over, what was the spectacle presented to those who stood beneath? The face was of one Who had expired in torments. The hollow of the eyes were clotted with Blood which streaked and disfigured the entire Body, winding its way down each limb and collecting in the ghastly wounds which the scourges had left, and even marking with its crimson hue the cracked and livid lips. We have set down all these things in their awful detail, to correct the morbid and too frequent shrinking even of pious persons from looking on what is most painful and humiliating in the actual circumstances of the Passion. An unreal and sentimental devotion will scarcely acknowledge that our Lord was in very deed disfigured as any other man would have been if subjected to the like violent treatment. All that theology teaches us regarding the sorrows of our Lord's Soul may be applied to the pain and disfigurement of His Body. He might indeed have prevented both the one and the other, but as He did not choose to do so, He allowed His own pain and the cruelty of His own creatures to work each one of those consequences in His Sacred Humanity which they would have produced in ourselves. Seeing that He sorrowed, and wept, and grew wearied and worn out, as we do, and that He suffered physical pain like to

ours, so also was He in reality physically disfigured, as we have described, through that pain and that suffering. Where then was the beauty which for three-and-thirty years had delighted the hearts of many, so that "the whole world went after Him" in Whose Person it was revealed. A little reflection will show that our Lord's disfigurements were "bands of love," tending to unite our hearts no less closely to His than did the positive attractions which we have contemplated at so great length.

In the first place we must remember the cause of our Lord's disfigurements. "Do not consider Me that I am brown, because the sun hath altered My colour; the sons of My mother have fought against Me, they have made Me the keeper in the vineyards."¹ It is thus that the inspired Word seems to afford us a clue to the reason for our Lord's altered colour in the disfigurement of His exterior person. The heat of the sun, that is, of the burning love which consumed Him, caused Him to give Himself up to the power of those who fought against Him. It was His love for us which exposed Him to the cruel treatment of those who were the instruments of God's justice for the punishment of sins, not upon the persons of the guilty, but upon the innocent victim Who bore the penalty of sin. "I am black, but beautiful," are the words He may address to us,—black on account of the disfigurements My sufferings have wrought in Me, but surely beautiful still in the eyes of those who love Me, and for whose sakes those sufferings were endured. Our human hearts should doubtless respond to this love, since it is so true in its nature, so deep in its intensity, and in no way affected by any external blemish that may occur in the object

¹ Cant. i. 5.

beloved. Instances have frequently been known in confirmation of the strength of an appeal like this. But when those blemishes or disfigurements have actually been caused simply through devotedness to ourselves, then indeed they become so many additional tongues, making loud appeal to our hearts to return love for love towards the friend who has so generously made oblation of himself in the cause of our best interests.

What parent who perceives a beloved daughter growing prematurely old, the lines of care marking themselves visibly on her brow, her lips drawn together with suppressed emotion, her eyes sunk and robbed of their brilliancy, while her whole figure stoops with fatigue and gradually loses all the suppleness of youth; what parent, if he comes to know that all this change has resulted from his child's devoted attendance upon and solicitude for himself during a long and tedious illness, could fail after this to feel and acknowledge his love for her increasing daily, the more he realizes the sad disfigurements of which he himself has been the cause? And if, as a consequence of her devotedness, maladies involving still more serious results should ensue, each fresh aggravation that manifests itself would be a motive for intensifying the love of the parent and elevating it to a still higher standard. Might not examples be multiplied of the same truth, but enough has been said to show how that which, humanly speaking, is unattractive, becomes under certain circumstances a positive incentive to increased love. Blindness, lameness, the privation of a limb, are all in themselves disfigurements, yet we have heard of cases innumerable wherein they have been distinctly the motive which attracted love towards those who were

thus afflicted. Without pretending to discover anything supernatural in this, we may at least discern therein a natural tendency of the human heart to find some beauty in what excites our compassion and appeals to our sympathies. It is one trace of the Creator's hand which He left on the soul of man in fashioning it; one of those resemblances to Himself which He mercifully communicated to His creatures. The same was manifested with all perfection in His Incarnate Son, Whose predilection was, as we have seen, for the afflicted; and does not affliction, commonly speaking, involve some species of disfigurement?

But above the natural attraction which even things intrinsically unattractive frequently possess for our human hearts, there is the supernatural attraction which they exercise over us, and this results from our seeing in them the disfigurements of our Lord. The saints could tell us much about this. They would reveal to us how the lepers and the plague-stricken, the blind, and lame, and dumb, together with those afflicted by God in divers other ways, laid especial claims upon their love, nay, seemed transfigured before them, so that they appeared to be endowed with a beauty not their own; just as the rich golden radiance of the setting sun, resting on some ruined cottage, or gnarled and twisted forest-tree, sheds over their unsightliness its own loveliness, and softens down their ruggedness with its mellow sheen. To that extent in which we resemble the saints, will the condition of the afflicted and the disfigurements accompanying affliction appear for us invested with beauty, because the stronger our spirit of faith is, so much the more clearly shall we behold in them the disfigurements of our Lord Himself, and the greater our love for Him is the greater also

will be our love for whatever in any way finds in Him its counterpart. On the contrary, the further removed we are from true sanctity, the less capable shall we be of discerning traces of the beauty of the disfigurements of Jesus in those of our brethren. Nay, there are persons in whom the disfigurements inflicted by pain and suffering, far from eliciting their reverence, rather provoke their mirth. Such as these would have probably found wherewith to sport, had they witnessed our Lord Himself staggering and falling beneath His Cross, His eyes soiled with tears and Blood, His whole Body contracted, distorted, and mutilated by its torments.

If we would truly discern our Lord to be still JESUS THE ALL-BEAUTIFUL, in His disfigurements as in all else that distinguished Him, we must see in Him our own true Saviour, our Brother, our Friend, and our Spouse. We must look on Him as far as possible with Mary's eyes, and, for this, we must borrow some at least of the love of her sinless heart. Did she find Him less beautiful amidst the disfigurements of the Passion than He had been during the three-and-thirty years which preceded it? Was there no beauty on the cracked and livid lips, all blood-stained as they were, and so stiff and swollen that they could no longer smile upon the Mother whose broken heart diffused its sorrow over her sweet sad face? Never, perhaps, even in the days of Bethlehem and Egypt, had they seemed to her so beautiful as now. Again, was there no beauty in the mangled and distorted Body as it lay all white and blood-streaked on the Mother's knees beneath the Cross, while she embalmed it for the burial? Ah! surely never had it been to her eye so lovely, even when Jesus had lain a beauteous Babe within her arms at Bethlehem. And will it not be the same with us in

proportion to our love? Our human hearts cannot fail to be drawn closer and closer to our Lord, the more clearly that His disfigurements are realized by us; and we shall discern amid them still the "all-beautiful one" "Whose loveliness shines through His "garments dyed" with Blood, and we shall recognize that He is even then the conqueror of souls by the might of His beauty, which no veil can effectually hide from eyes rendered clear and keen-sighted by love.

But there is another kind of disfigurement besides that which is strictly physical; and we must not omit to notice it, since it forms an integral feature in the Passion of our Lord. We speak now of His ignominy and shame. It was one thing to have seen Him clothed with the calm majesty which all His meekness and humility could not disguise, walking amongst His disciples in the dignified bearing of a Heaven-sent Teacher, while grace and loveliness and latent power beamed forth from His countenance and manifested themselves without disguise in every turn and gesture of His limbs. It was another thing to behold Him conquered, as it were, made helpless from infirmity, and, above all, so stripped of His garments as to be exposed to an insulting mob. This last indignity must have been more sensitively felt by our Lord than all the rest combined—so grossly wounding the modesty, as well as the dignity, of His Manhood. There He hung in the light of that spring afternoon, in His nakedness and powerlessness; for since He had given Himself up to those who hated Him, and since He would not deliver Himself, as He might have done, out of their hands, He had made Himself in very deed helpless, with nothing left but to submit Himself to every outrage that their malice should suggest.

Yet was He still beautiful in His disfigurements, still adorable in His shame. Whilst our hearts burn with a deeper, stronger, and, in truth, more supernatural love, we are constrained to prostrate ourselves in the dust, acknowledging that it is our guilt which has thus denuded Him, that it is the burning sun of His love for us which has thus discoloured Him. Into His ear, too, let us softly breathe our conviction: Thou alone, O Jesus, art "beautiful above the sons of men" even in Thy disfigurements; Thou alone art truly venerable even in Thy shame and Thy abasements; Thou alone art great; Thou alone most highly exalted; Thou alone art the Sovereign Lord and supreme love of our hearts. "The Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity."¹ In the shame and disfigurement of that infirmity He must surely possess stronger claims, if possible, to our love; and He will be more beautiful to our love-enlightened eyes even than He was when like to the mid-day sun in the full meridian of His loveliness, of His splendour, and of His power.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JESUS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS WEARINESS AND REST.

Jesus therefore being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well
(St. John iv. 6).

THERE are many kinds of weariness in this world of ours, and our Lord made experience of them all, save that only which results from sin and worldliness. He was wearied with toil, with journeyings, with long and apparently fruitless arguments and discourses, with sorrow, with the sickening sight of sin, with His long and painful exile in a corrupt world. Not a shadow, however, of the imperfection that inevitably mingles with our weariness, even when proceeding from such causes as those enumerated above, was to be found in the weariness of Jesus.

It showed forth the beauty of His love in His assumption of our human nature, as it was likewise an act of His Divine condescension, that He should acquire experimental knowledge of the peculiar form of suffering which, perhaps, more than any other makes us yearn for the rest that earth was never designed to give. There is a mystery singularly exceptional in the weariness of Him Who yet could know no fatigue, of Him Who was Himself the refreshment of fatigued and weary souls, the rest of those who are fainting on their journey beneath the heat and burden of the day. Yet He was weary with a real weariness, just as He

was inwardly oppressed with real grief and tortured with sensible and exterior pain. His weariness was also of two kinds: first, as has been said, He experienced physical weariness in the arduous labours of His Ministry; but secondly, and far more deeply, He experienced that weariness of heart which results naturally from sorrow and disappointment, as well as that yearning of the soul for its final rest, which is so natural a longing in every man.

In ourselves this weariness too frequently degenerates into imperfection, by reason of our selfishness and our want of resemblance to Jesus in His perfect conformity to His Father's will. In Him it was the weariness of a perfect human Soul, whose every faculty and sense was raised to the Divine order through its union with the Word. Even in our fellow-creatures, provided that it does not degenerate into peevish complaint or selfish inaction, there is something in their weariness that to a certain extent attracts our human hearts. If this be physical weariness, it ordinarily imparts a subdued and refined gentleness of manner, to which those who possess a more vigorous or robust organization are entire strangers. There is less danger of sensual excess in the indulgence they allow themselves during their hours of ordinary recreation; not that this moderation in any way proceeds from virtue, but from an enforced repose which in some cases will be gladly accepted as a substitute for culture. Physical weariness, moreover, is a means employed by God to detach us from the gratifications of sense and from the frivolity of the world; He would by it also lead us on to long for a nobler rest than sensible enjoyment can ever bestow. As soon as this eager desire is raised to the height of the supernatural by the introduction

of a truly religious motive, it reminds us of the lassitude of Him Who was wearied with His journey, and, when united to the merits of His Divine weariness, it enables us to share in the like heavenly character.

But there exists another and still more sanctifying cause of weariness, and one which more directly tells upon the nobler qualities of our souls, and thus detaches us more quickly and powerfully from the pleasures of this life. The cause of mental weariness, we now speak of, is sorrow; not a selfish sorrow, but a pure-hearted sorrow for sin, whether it be the sin of others or our own. Such, too, is a loyal mourning for the protracted and apparently endless trials of the Church and of the just; such is grief for our own infidelities and the weariness attendant on the long-enduring struggle with temptation, beneath which it seems to us we are drifting away from God. Oh! how the soul yearns, under similar trials, for that haven where the billows of the sea of this world may no more break over it, threatening it with shipwreck. Without murmuring at the appointments of the Divine will—for we are speaking of Christian weariness—how idle everything appears to us which lacks the power of dissipating the clouds that hang above us; how intense becomes the longing for that rest which God alone can bestow. Into all this, as we have said, much imperfection ordinarily enters. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly an element in the sanctification of many, and is capable of becoming—if, when regarding the weariness of our Lord, we contemplate also His rest—a useful means of drawing us nearer to Him, and uniting us more intimately to His Sacred Heart.

We read that, at the time of our Lord's journey from Judea into Galilee, being wearied He sat down to

rest at the well of Jacob. Taking first these words in their simplest sense, we understand that He was really footsore and fatigued with long walking, just as any of ourselves would have been. Now fatigue manifests itself generally in the paleness of the countenance, in the expression of languor that rests upon the features, and in a heaviness weighing upon every limb and making the slightest movement to be really a great effort. Since our Lord permitted such weariness as this to come upon Him, we must suppose that its ordinary physical consequences were as easily perceptible in His Sacred Person as they would be in ours. It is but just to remark that this fact, combined with the request made by our Lord for a draught of refreshing water when He said, "Give Me to drink," showed Him to be truly a Man, subject to the laws and requirements of human nature. For this reason did it distinctly bear striking testimony to the admirable faith of the Samaritan woman, who, notwithstanding, so readily recognized and acknowledged Him for the promised Messiah. Probably there was something in the marked weariness about our Lord that touched a kind and generous chord within her heart, and prepared her for some especial supernatural influence. This was another of the cords of Adam which Jesus cast around her, with the view of drawing her to admit the claims He was about to lay upon her faith in the truth of His Divinity. There is for ourselves, as we contemplate Him sitting thus upon the well, and wearied with His journey, a certain charm exclusive of the mystery which we have the authority of St. Augustine for saying was shadowed forth in this incident. We behold Him as a pilgrim and a wayfarer, in need of rest and refreshment, and we love to contemplate Him as He

sits there in His ever-watchful consent to the feeling of fatigue, awaiting the Samaritan's approach, in order that He may carry healing to her soul. This event possessed so strong an attraction for the devotion of St. Teresa, that she always kept beside her a little picture of the scene, and very frequently made it the subject of her meditation.

But, venturing to penetrate further than our Lord's exterior weariness, let us gather some additional light from the circumstances immediately preceding His journey. We are told that, when Jesus heard of the Baptist's confinement in prison, He left Judea and retired into Galilee. This was the apparent cause assigned for His withdrawal. He knew the treatment His Precursor had met with, and He saw full well that He Himself was the person aimed at. After this discouragement, humanly speaking, which assailed the beginning of His Public Ministry, our Lord set out towards Galilee. Sorrow lay heavily on His Heart, and He would, for our sakes, experience the weariness following upon sorrow, or disappointment, and on the clear prevision before His eye of the long and obstinate resistance to be brought to bear against His merciful designs. As He journeyed along the road to Sychar, many thoughts occupied His mind, and these could not fail to add to the weariness of the way; but now a two-fold rest presented itself to Him, and in availing Himself of that He appears still more beautiful than in His weariness. While sitting beside the well the Samaritan woman came to draw water, and we are fully acquainted with the history of what followed. The place, and the hour of her coming, had been foreseen by our Lord from all eternity. As she drew near He addressed her. The conversion of her soul was to

be His rest and refreshment, far more so than the material repose afforded Him by the shaded seat at Jacob's Well, or the drink of water which He asked the woman to draw for Him out of it. We have in this narrative of marked interest a faithful image of the weariness and of the rest of Jesus during the entire course of His life. The toil of the missionary in evangelizing souls is one that involves much long-suffering patience, whence comes the weariness incidental to man in all such work for God. How greatly then must not the human Heart of Jesus have felt the pressure of the evangelization and redemption of the whole world.

But the ordinary labourer meets with his reward, and in like manner the Divine labourer, during the course of His Ministry, met with recompenses for His frequent disappointments. Thus when, on the dark side of the picture, the people belonging to the country of the Gerasenes besought Him to depart from their coasts, after driving forth the legion of devils from the man who was possessed, our Lord yielded to their request, and turned back from whence He came. But although, while recrossing the sea, His Heart must have been filled with the weariness of that sorrow which many a generous apostle has since experienced at the opposition to and failure of all His efforts, yet our Lord, however baffled by that ungrateful people, found on reaching the other side of the lake a multitude who received Him gladly, because "they were all waiting for Him." ¹ If one Apostle betrayed Him, the other, who in a moment of weakness denied Him, opened out his soul to grace, and became the model of a penitent and confessor, the Head of the Church under his Divine Master, and ultimately a glorious

martyr ; whilst a third stood faithful beneath the Cross to the very end. If one of the thieves blasphemed Him and became a reprobate, the other nobly confessed Him and was saved at the eleventh hour. If some of the disciples found His word too hard, and went back and walked with Him no more, He was consoled by the generous loyalty of Peter's avowal that He alone had the words of eternal life, and by his perseverance, as well as that of his fellow-Apostles. The case of the Samaritan woman ended, to the signal refreshment of His Soul, not only in the conversion of the woman herself, but, through her, of the whole city of Sychar ; and this formed our Lord's repose after the weariness of that sorrow which had driven Him from Judea. In like manner did our Lord, on other occasions, take His rest after the different fatigues of His exile.

To know the mind and the will of God, and to find our joy in doing that will, is indeed the true rest of the loving soul. Now the Divine knowledge of our Lord enabled Him to understand the mind and will of His Father perfectly. To do His will was His meat—His nourishment, as He Himself declared to His disciples. In the absence of the woman of Samaria, who, flushed with the first joy of her conversion, had returned to the city in haste, in order that she might call upon the inhabitants to come and see Him Whom she had recognized for the Christ, His disciples reappeared, begging Him to take some meat. He replied that He had meat to eat which they knew not of. They thought He spoke of material nourishment, whereupon our Lord explained that His meat was to do the will of Him Who sent Him, and "to perfect His work ;" this work being the salvation of the souls of men. It was then in the performance of His work, which was "ever

before Him,"¹ that our Lord found His rest, since to "perfect" that work was the end for which He came on earth. This was the will of His Father. This was His food and His refreshment, as it was to be that of His Apostles, and should be of all who, like them, labour in the vineyard of the Lord. Thus it was that Jesus, when He seemed to be resting, and when in the sense we have shown He in reality did rest, nevertheless most efficaciously utilized that rest by toiling for our salvation. We read in the Gospel of His frequently going away to the mountains, where He passed the night. Wearied with the labours of the day, the silence of the night and the cool air succeeding the heat and turmoil of the cities afforded a natural refreshment of which His Human Nature was sensible, just as it would have been in ourselves. But in what did His true rest consist? It was in still negotiating the affair of our salvation by prayer and continual oblation of Himself to His Eternal Father. "And He passed the whole night in the prayer of God."² So had it been at Nazareth, when His Ever Blessed Mother and St. Joseph had often knelt in rapt adoration watching His repose, for He was still pursuing His work. If He slept, His Heart watched, and His "Soul hath laboured." Beautiful rest of Jesus by which "many were justified," wherein "He prayed for the transgressors" and "delivered His Soul unto death," thus accepting the sufferings of His Passion and Crucifixion!³ As each "Scripture was fulfilled," each prophecy realized, our Lord saw His work becoming perfected. Each grief, causing weariness to His human Heart, had its corresponding rest in the knowledge that

¹ Isaias lxii. 11.

² St. Luke vi. 12.

³ Isaias liii. 11, 12.

it was the accomplishment of an eternal decree, an exterior manifestation of the mind of His Father, another stage in His own pilgrimage here below. Thus it was also that His Heart dilated as His Passion drew nearer. He was "straitened" for the accomplishment of His baptism of Blood, He "desired with desire" to eat the Pasch with His disciples, as the immediate precursor of that last tragedy wherein the work of the Father was, by His co-operation, to attain its final perfection.

And when at length the end had come, and our Lord was suspended upon the tree, which was to be for man the instrument of his redemption; when every type and figure had been fulfilled, every jot and tittle of His Father's will accomplished; when every torment of Soul and Body was pressing upon Him—abandoned, despised, annihilated as He was—He could exclaim on seeing the work of the Father perfected, "It is consummated," then was the rest of Jesus complete, for the end of His Mission had been reached. "In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will, O My God; I have desired it, and Thy law is in the midst of My Heart."¹ To do that will had been the rest of the Heart of Jesus during the whole period of His life. This had been His repose in the weariness of His exile, in the bitterness of His sorrows, in the toils of His Mission upon earth; it was so now in the supreme pain and anguish which that will required of Him, before His work could be made fully perfect. To sum up all, He found the highest realization of His own ideal of rest from weariness to be ever the fulfilment of that will, which had decreed that He should be its victim.

¹ Psalm xxxix. 9.

Beautiful, eternal rest of Jesus! partially made known to us on earth through faith, but of which the unclouded manifestation, that shall be seen through and through, is reserved for the one great day without a sunset, when we shall see Him as He is in His beauty, there in that land still afar off, the bosom of His Father, encircled round about with the glory which He had before the world was.

We shall all share, according to our power and degree, in the work of our Lord, to wit, the salvation of our brethren. This is the will of our Father Who is in Heaven, this the work we must perfect, according to the example of our Elder Brother, by personal suffering. But before our Father's work is perfected, before consummation shall have crowned the undertaking, many kinds of weariness have still to be experienced by us, in which we must seek our rest where our Lord found His—in doing the Father's will. Sorrow and pain, disgrace and disappointment, despoliation and annihilation, though they bring weariness in their train, will yet be welcome to us if we love, because they will enable us to advance the work of our Father by the perfect accomplishment of His will. There is the weariness too of those for whom every link and tie to earth is broken by the highest spiritual detachment, whose souls are athirst for the effulgent vision of that beauty of which they have caught a few faint and passing glimpses here below. For, every one of those "who have believed shall enter into rest,"¹ the rest which is God Himself, according to His own words, "They shall enter into My rest."

¹ Hebrews iv. 3.

CONCLUSION.

IN writing the work which we now conclude, it will be seen that one object throughout has been held exclusively before the mind, the object namely of portraying the beauty of our Lord under its several aspects, or in other words, of contemplating the Sacred Humanity from the one point of its perfect beauty. This object must never be lost sight of by the reader, for otherwise we shall be accused of much needless repetition.

Our aim has been to fix the mind in more concentrated attention on the loveliness of Jesus all-beautiful, in Whose Sacred Person everything bears the impress of the Divinity. In order to attain our end, we have been sparing in subjective reflection, fully persuaded that, if our spiritual eye be only filled with a clear perception of the beauty of God Incarnate, His Holy Spirit will assuredly, when aided by faithful co-operation, do the rest, and will plant in our souls the likeness of the excellencies we behold in Jesus.

We are all seeking rest and beauty and consolation everywhere, under some form or other, but nowhere shall we be fully satisfied if not in Him Who is Himself essential Beauty, Who is the fountain-head of all consolation, and the eternal rest of the Saints. Here below indeed our knowledge of His loveliness cannot be

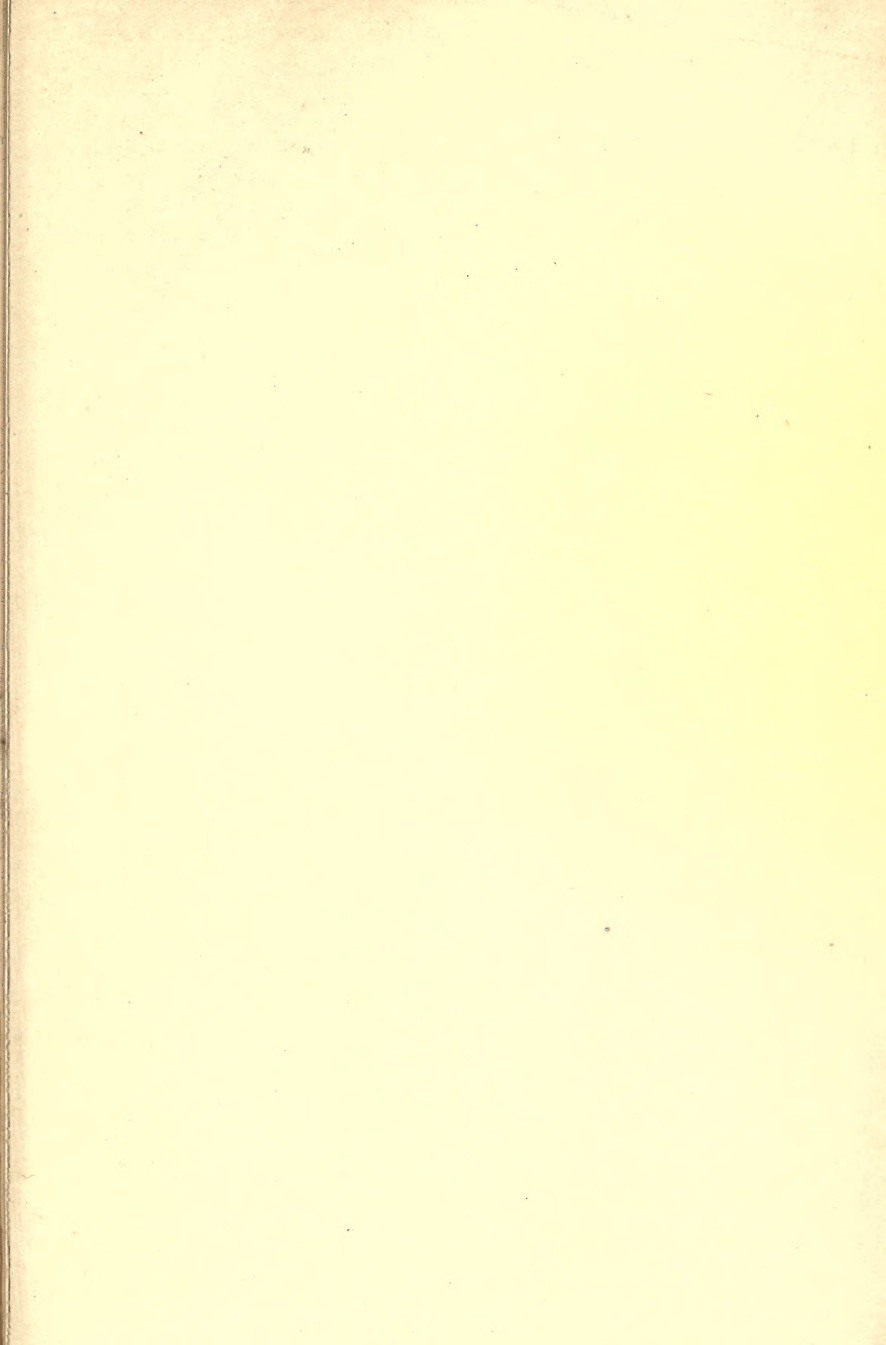
obtained without painstaking and persevering effort, combined with self-denial and interior abnegation. Here also we can catch only glimpses of His transcendent beauty. These, however, are more than sufficient to reward our fidelity, to refresh our souls amidst the weariness of earth's sorrows and temptations, and to feed in us those streams of Divine love which spring up into life everlasting.

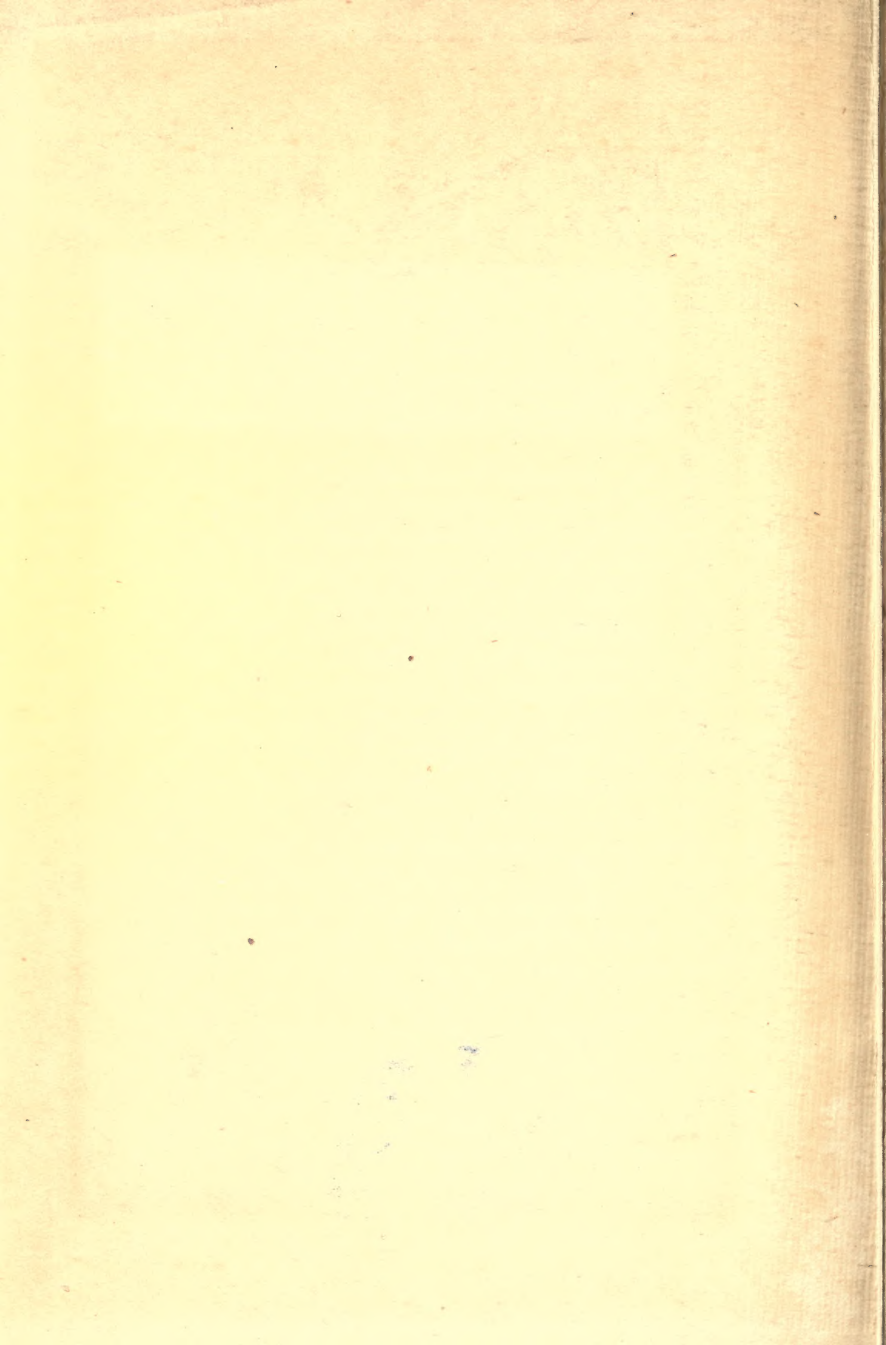
In proportion as we have placed our joy in the contemplation of the beauty of the Son of God upon earth, will be the measure of our joy when we shall behold Him in His Heavenly Kingdom. There we shall see Him, no longer concealed by the veils of past humiliation, but standing forth filled through and through, and enveloped all round about, with the splendours of His beauty—ininitely beautiful in the glory of His Humanity, living and reigning in His unity with the Father and the Holy Ghost, throughout everlasting ages.

“I saw one like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to His feet, . . . and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. And His voice as the sound of many waters, . . . and His face was as the sun shining in his power. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying: Fear not. I am the first and the last, and am alive and was dead: and behold, I am living for evermore.”¹

To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

¹ Apoc. i. 13—18.





D 308.49 .147 1910
SMC
Teresa Gertrude of the
Blessed Sacrament,
Jesus ; the
all-beautiful : a
BBD-0326 (mcsk)



